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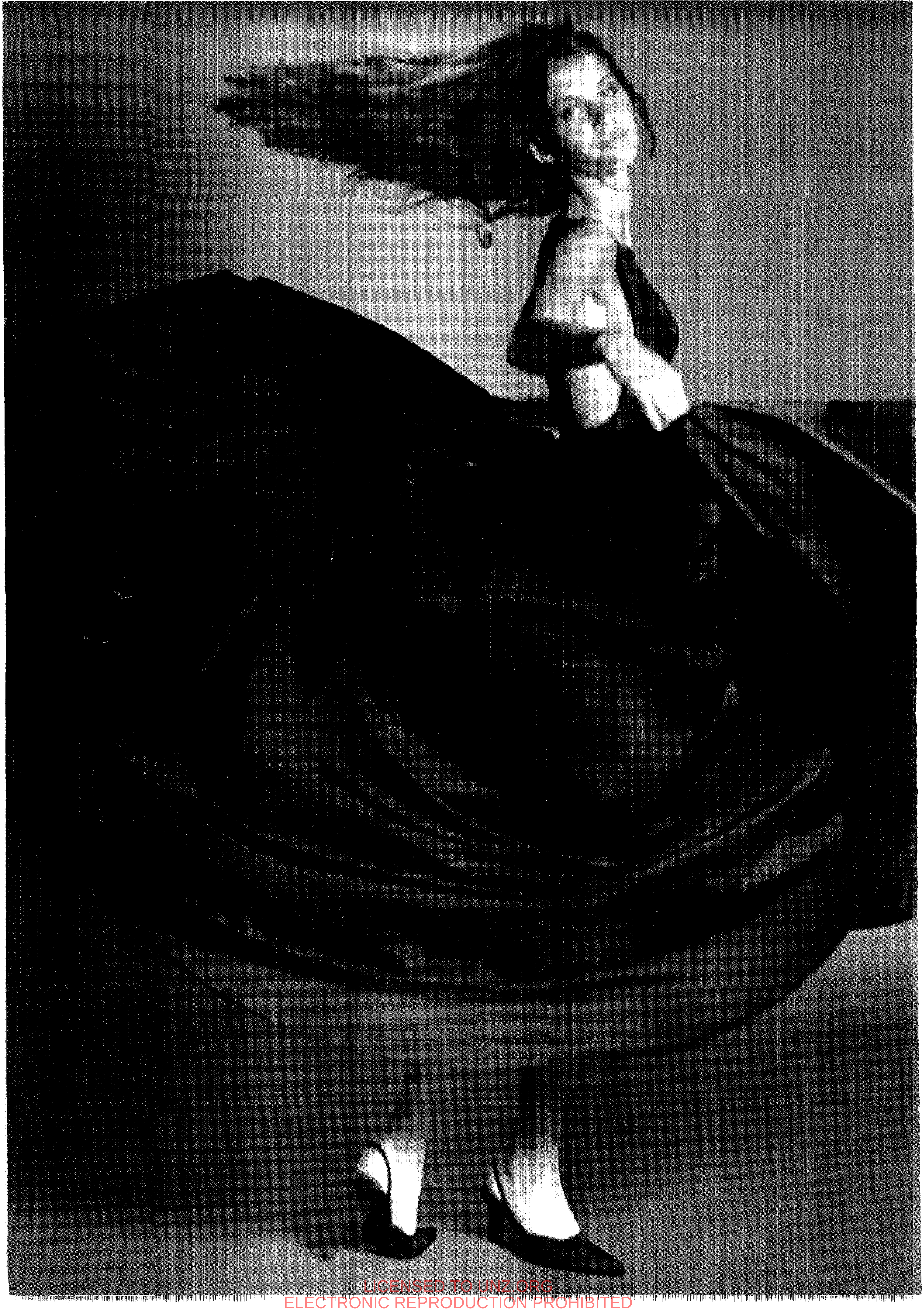

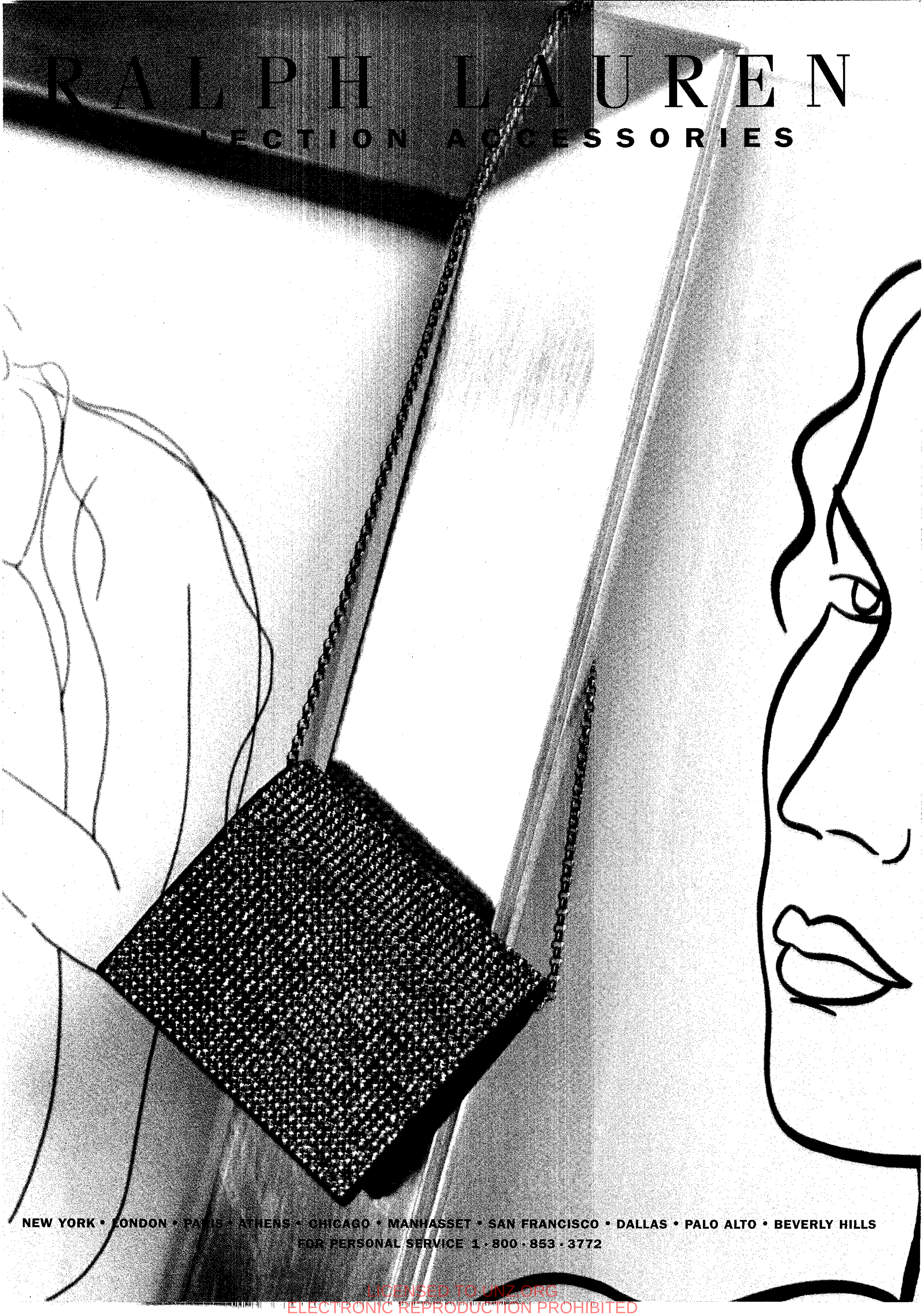

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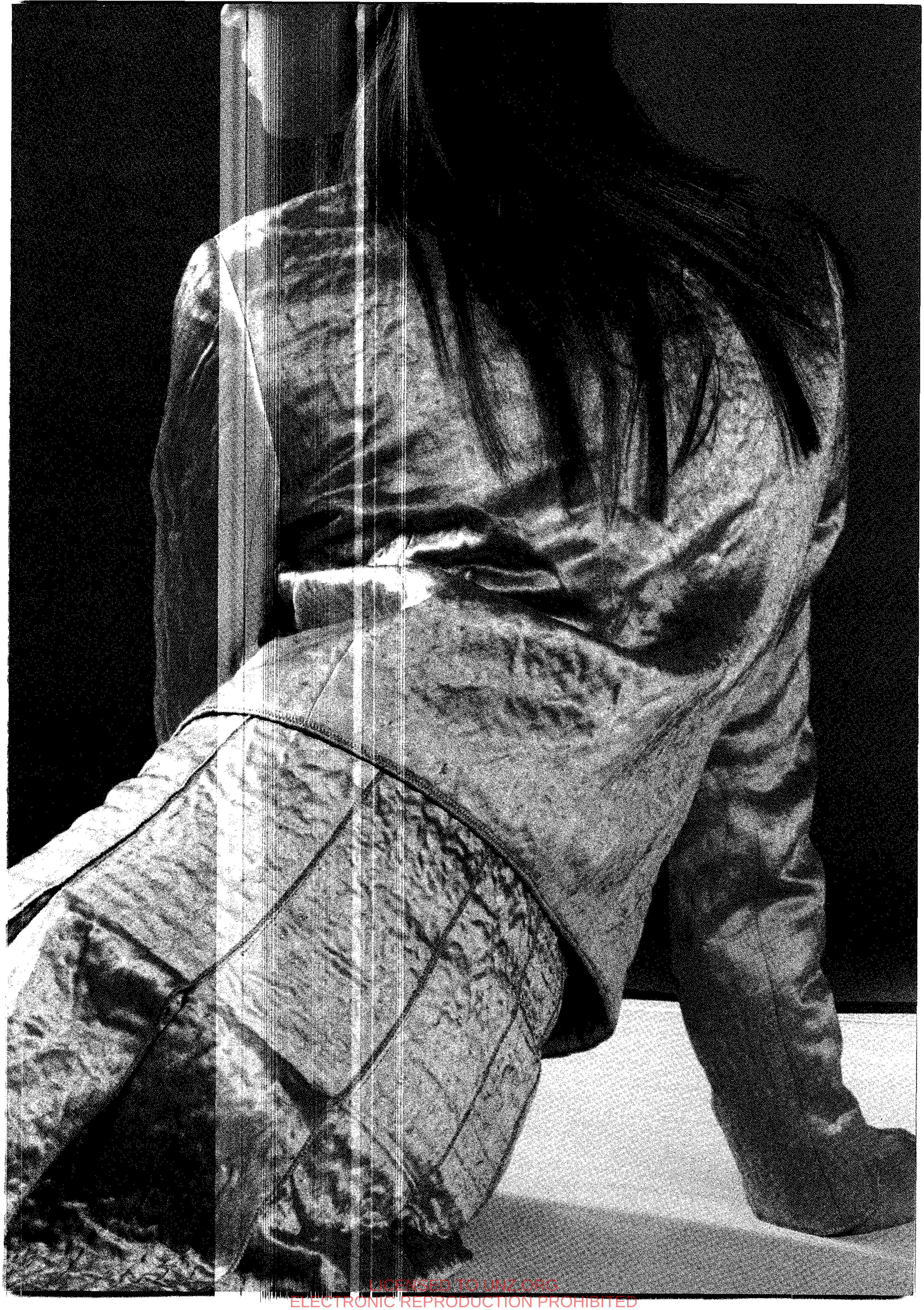

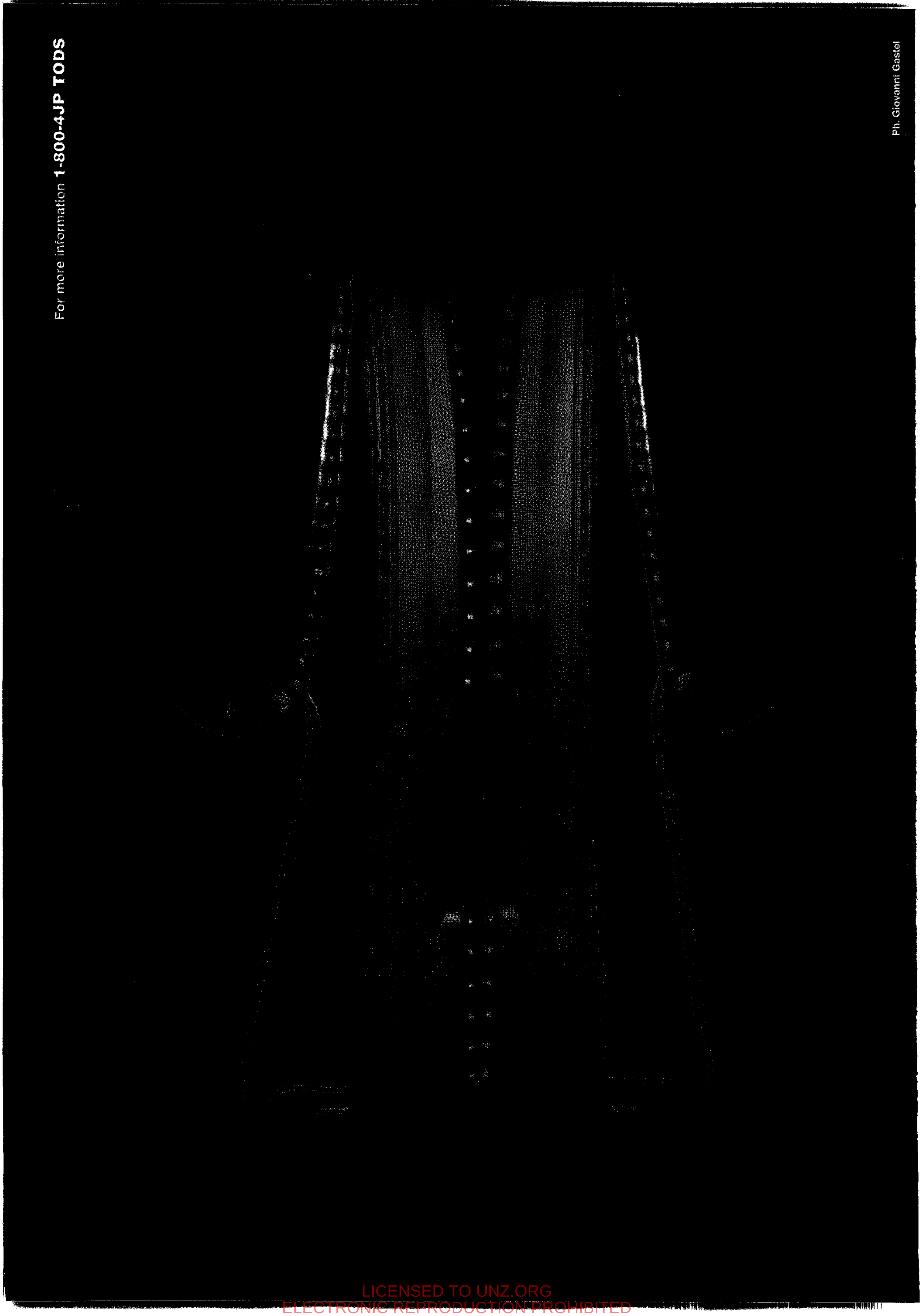

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Snow, even in the city, reminded him of skiing, which he had given up. His wife didn't ski. In his bachelor days, he had associated his ski vacations with romantic encounters. Single girls who skied were not averse to speed, or to other physical risks. He'd once met a Dutch girl in Klosters. She was too tall for the bed at the Chesa Grischuna, where (in the athleticism of their lovemaking) she'd broken her right big toe against the headboard and couldn't ski for the rest of her holiday. He had escaped that relationship with only minor injuries.

He'd suffered more lasting scars from an adventure in Aspen, of which (despite the passage of time) he was enduringly fond. She was a German girl who drank Absolut, straight out of the freezer, while she overheated herself in his shower at the Hotel Jerome. She'd made an unheard-of deal with room service: they brought her the frosted fifth of vodka–a full bottle–and a frozen shot glass. She offered him an icy swallow, but his hand was wet, the shot glass was slippery, and he dropped the small, heavy glass in the steamy shower. He promptly stepped on it, cutting his foot.

Then *he* was the one who couldn't ski. The stitches, in the ball of his left foot, made him limp on his heel. But while the German girl skied, he happily anticipated her daily arrival in his room at the Jerome. She was admirably consistent: she would begin by ordering the frosty bottle, which was always full, and the ice-cold shot glass. He still dreamed about her reddened skin, smelling of the pine-scented soap from the shower. Usually her hair was wet; he couldn't recall its true color.

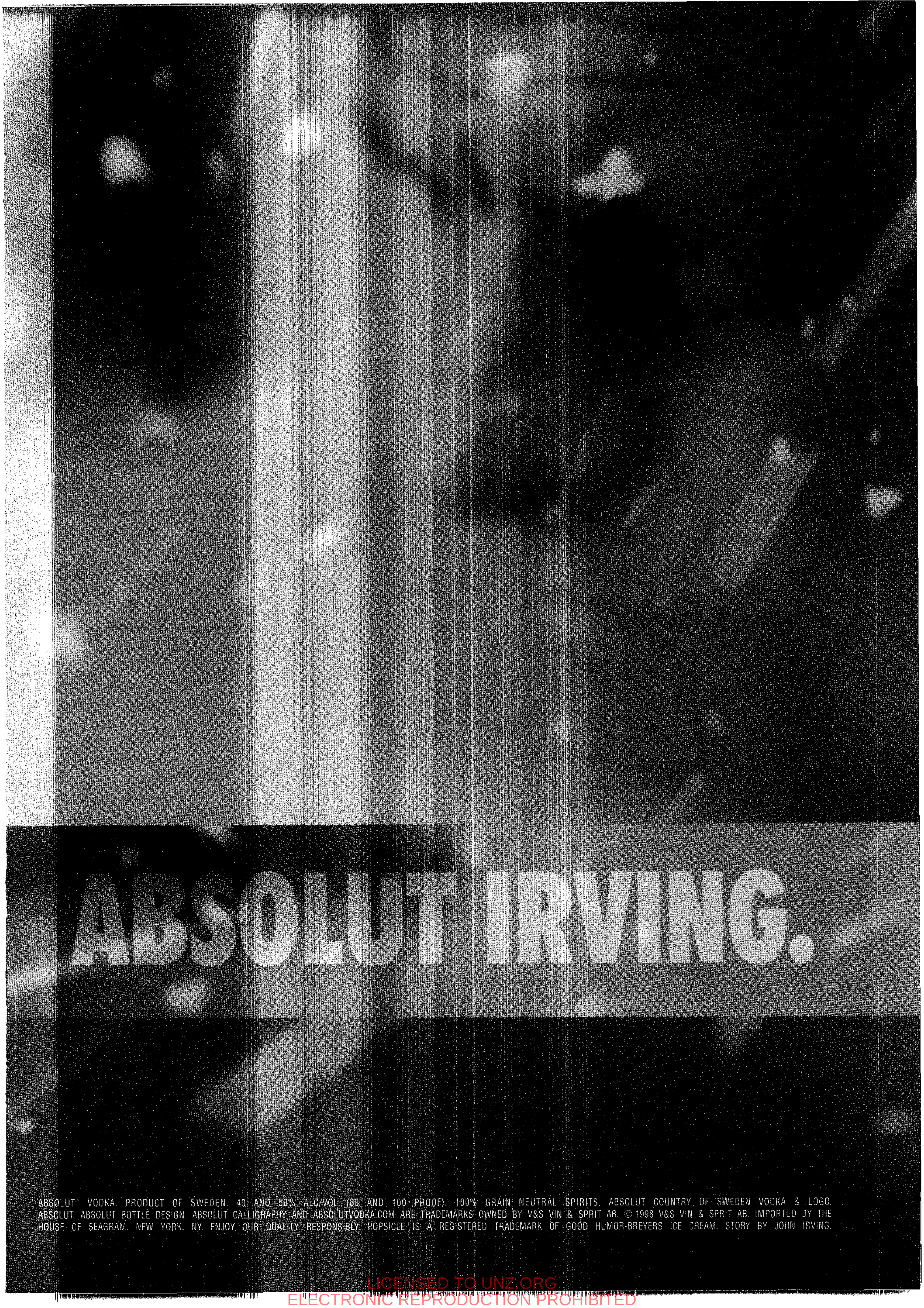
She was traveling with her parents–and with her kid sister, with whom she shared a room. She had to have dinner with her family every evening. If she ever spent the night with him, her sister would have ratted to her parents, but their late-afternoon liaisons were all that he could have hoped for.

One afternoon, in the passion of the moment, the shot glass rolled under the bed. The German girl proposed that they sip the half-frozen vodka from each other's bellybutton. His navel was disappointingly shallow. In the waning light, as the room grew colder, his bed got wet. As he remembered it, the girl's bellybutton was as deep as a well. He never spilled–he drank every drop.

Now, as the newfallen snow blanketed Manhattan, he remembered the German girl's navel–and her other exciting parts. From the kitchen freezer of his apartment, he poured himself a shot glass of Absolut. He kept the bottle and the shot glass in the rear of the freezer, behind the frozen fish sticks and the frozen peas and corn, the Popsicles that the children liked, and his wife's homemade tomato sauce.

One chilly swallow of the vodka, and the snow that was falling on Lexington Avenue could have been falling on Aspen–dotting the heads and shoulders of the tired skiers returning to the Hotel Jerome.

He never regretted that his wife didn't ski, or that she wore socks to bed and would have slapped him if he'd ever poured half-frozen vodka in her navel. He loved family life. The risks of skiing, and romantic encounters, no longer tempted him. Now, even when it snowed, the Absolut sufficed.



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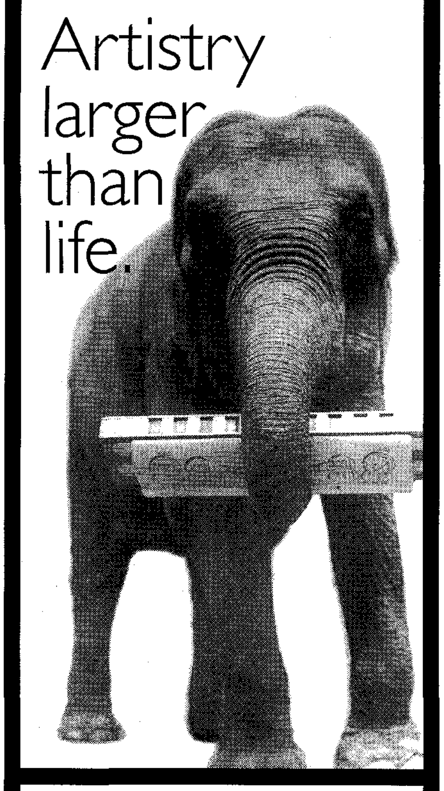

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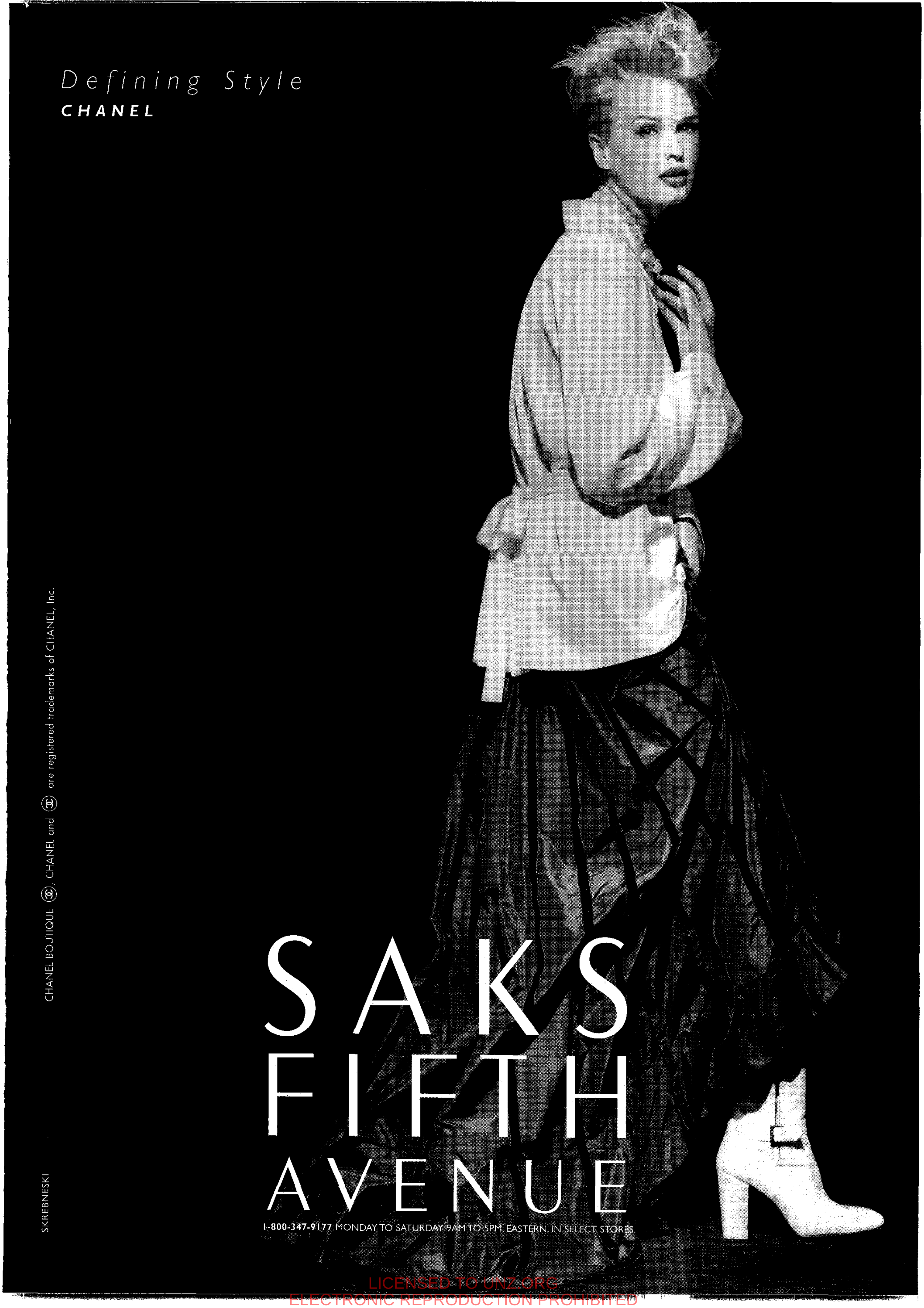

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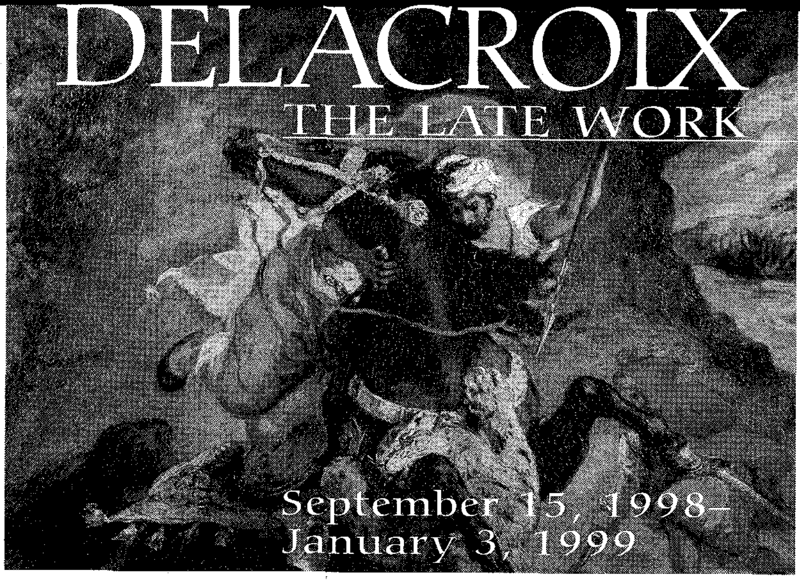

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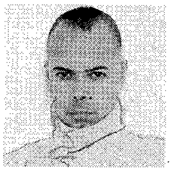

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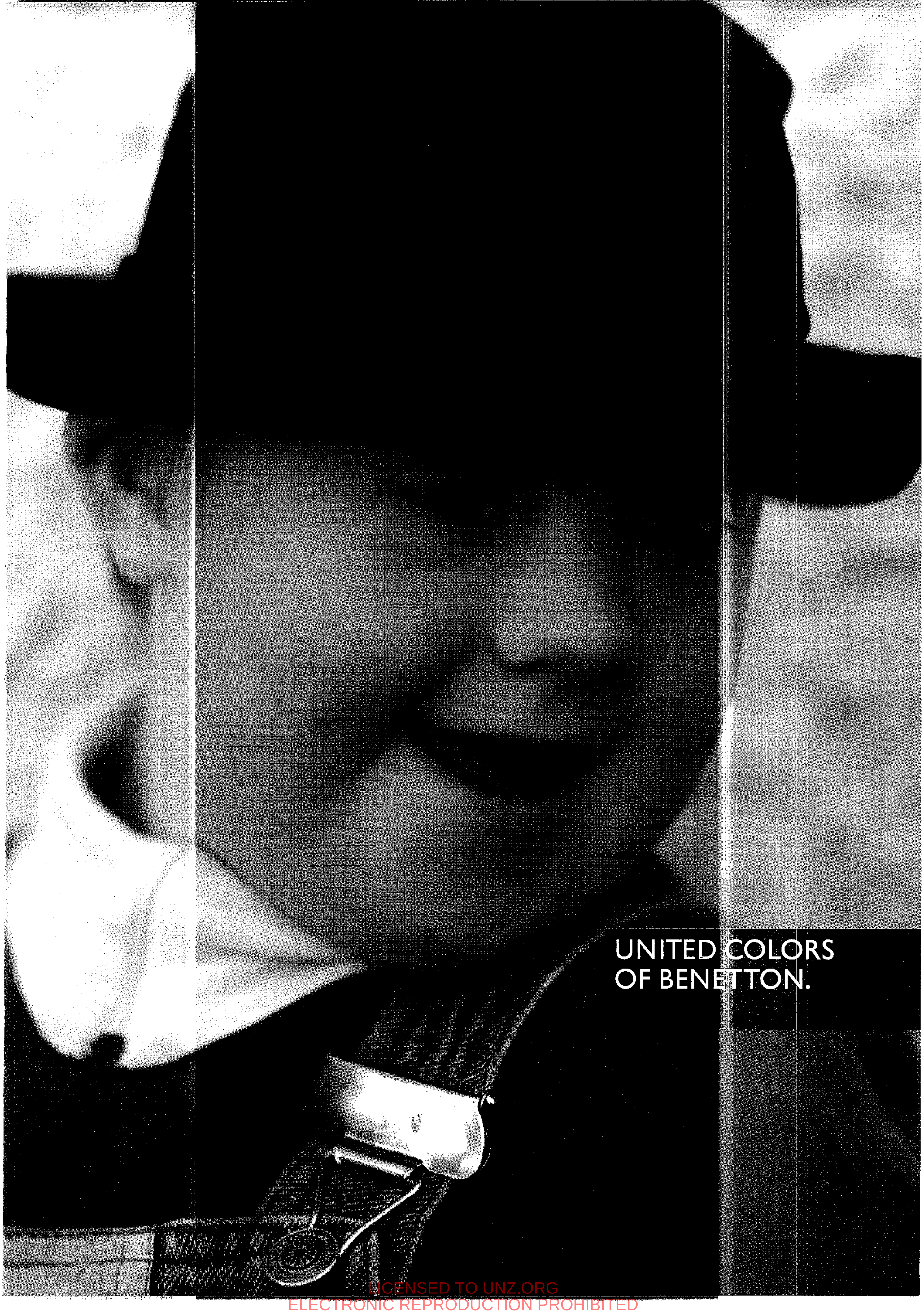
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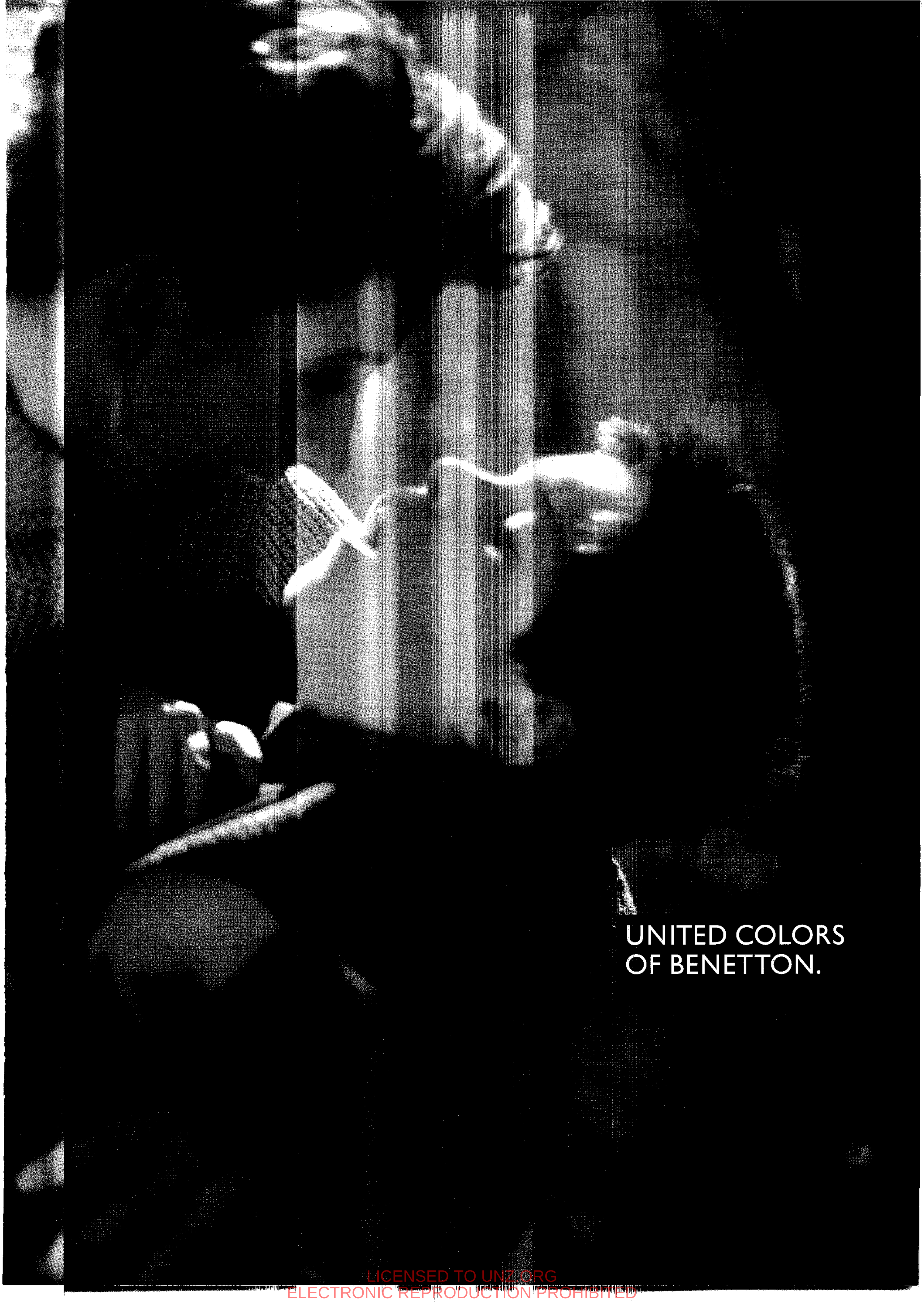
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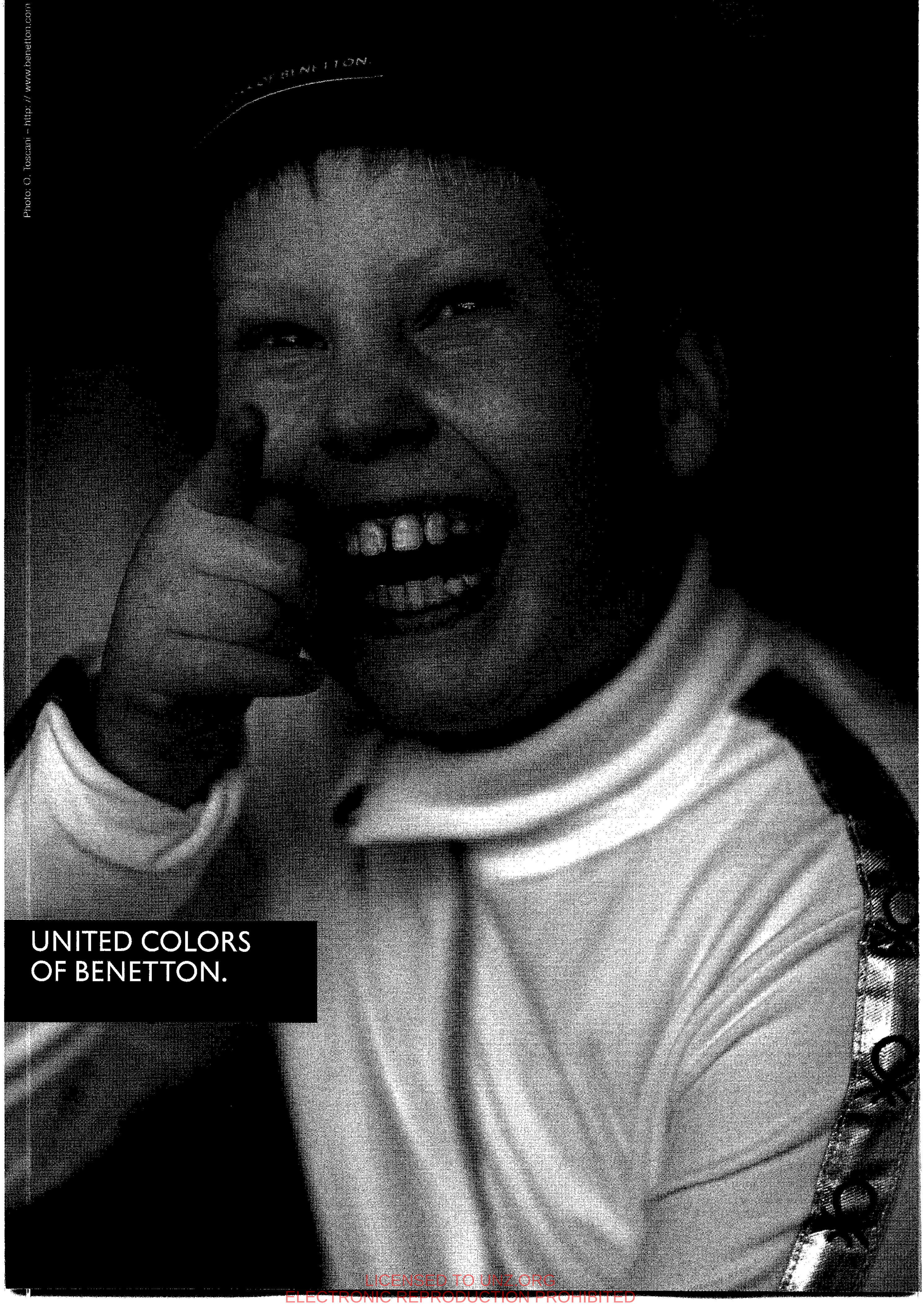
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COMMENT

LONG GONE

Can Mark McGwire's great coup bring back the game we knew?

WHEN Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa stepped onto the field at Busch Stadium on Labor Day afternoon, this splendid baseball summer came to its peak. Perhaps the ceremonies and accolades over a coming new home-run record should have taken place then and there, before the first pitch and before the deed, so that we could thank the two heroes for such a moment, without the inevitable distractions of hype and history. "It's so engaging," Commissioner Bud Selig had observed the day before. This Cubs-Cardinals game was already historic, representing, as it did, a club rivalry going back to the beginning of this century, and the choice base hit of that long series now arrived swiftly: a first-inning line drive by Big Mac that caromed off a window of the Stadium Club restaurant just below the left-field upper deck. It was McGwire's sixty-first home run of the season, tying the Roger Maris record, which had stood for thirty-seven years. The celebrations were joyful, but the rest of the game was a bit of a letdown: a lone single for Sosa, whose home-run total remained at fifty-eight. The awaited new number—McGwire's sixty-two, at last—turned up in the fourth inning the following evening: a low rocket against the Cubs' right-hander Steve Trachsel that barely cleared the fence in left field. It was McGwire's fifteenth round-tripper in twenty games, and his shortest and quickest homer of the year. History had arrived in a hurry, but America had been like, ready.

The Commissioner's Office had prepared well for the big doings, being bang on the job at Busch with extra security to forestall mayhem or muggings among the scrambling bleacherites, and with a secret ball-marking process—not, it seems, one of those anti-terrorist explosives taggants—that would positively identify the just-arrived holy relic. The I.R.S. weighed in with warnings about the gift-tax complexities that awaited anyone hoping to cash in on a ball with a potential value of between two hundred and fifty thousand and a million dollars—give it to your wife, stick it up on the mantel for the winter, and then hand it over to the Hall of Fame would appear the best course—but these dollar estimates had come before the recent stock-market meltdown. Back on October 2, 1961, the Monday after Roger Maris smacked his sixty-first homer, up at Yankee Stadium, the Dow stood at 699. That ball, snaffled by a right-field patron named Sal Durante, was sold to a restaurateur for five

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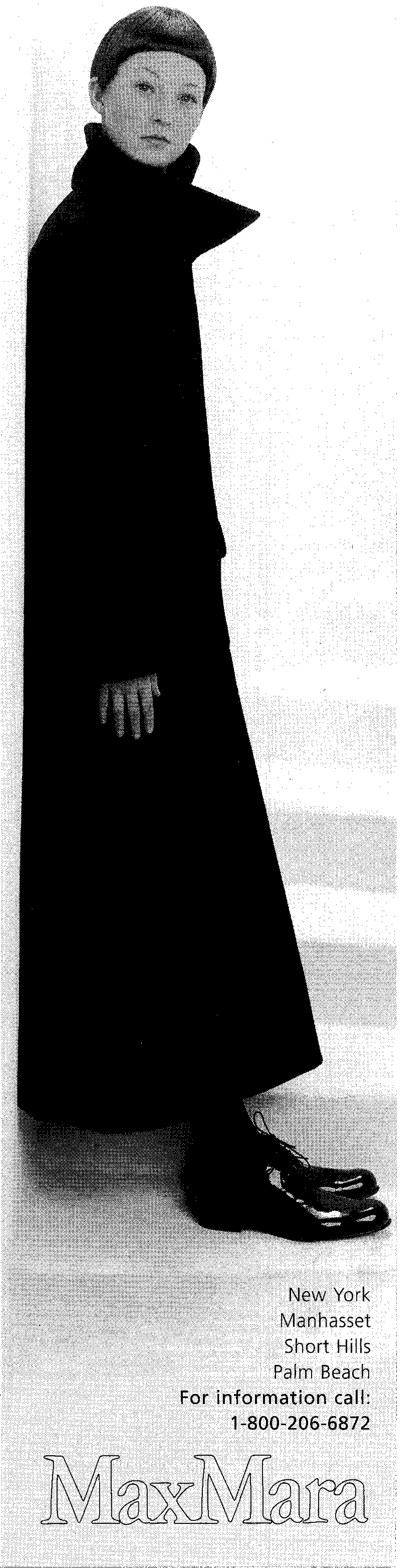

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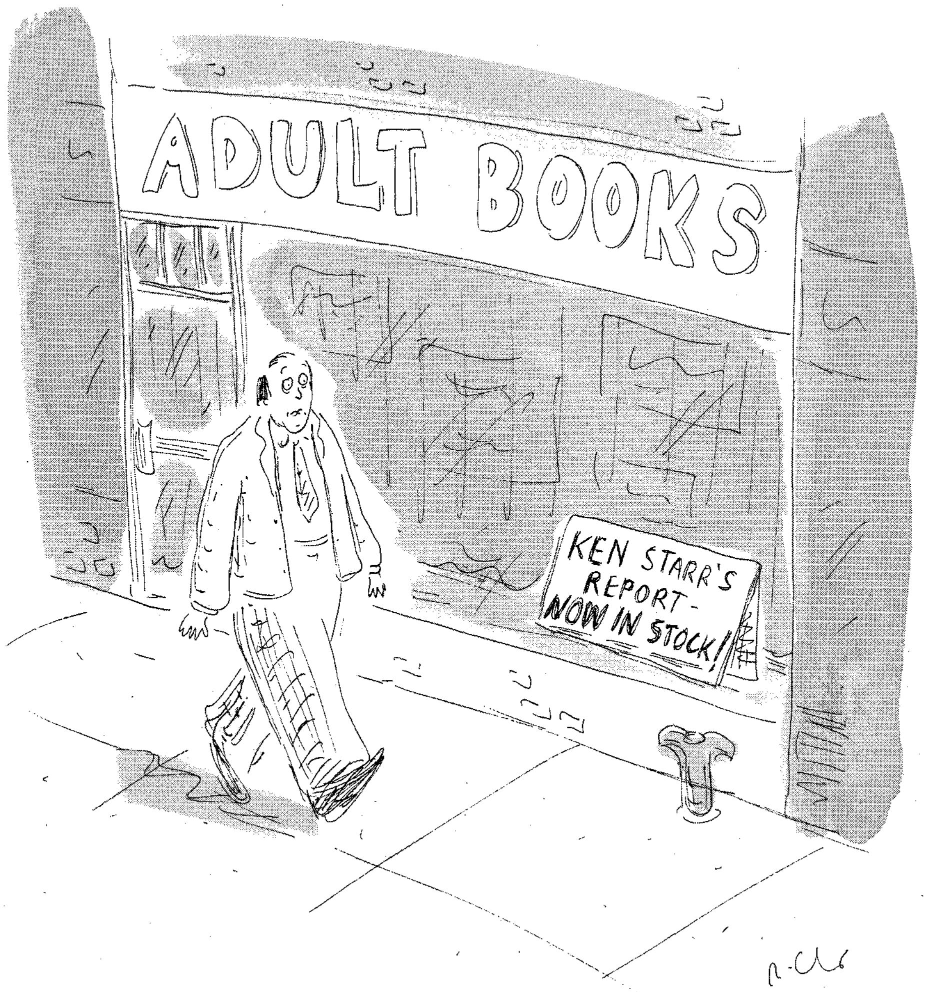
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thousand dollars. Only twenty-three thousand fans were on hand to see Babe Ruth's famous 1927 record broken.

Perhaps nothing in baseball changes, but this Big Mac summer, for all its rewards, kept stuffing us with empty calories. Which of us fans, checking out the inexorable "Maris Watch" boxes on the front page on a day when neither McGwire nor Sosa nor the Mariners' Junior Griffey had rapped a homer, didn't give in occasionally to an irritated "*C'mon*, you guys." Much of the time, the record-keeping and the projections and the rest of the unnews appeared to have the best of it, outweighing the standings and the box scores. Eighty-eight per cent of 5,815 readers of *USA Today* wanted Maris's old record broken, we learned, and seventy-nine per cent of those fans polled thought it should be McGwire who would bop the blast. A late statistical projection by *Baseball Weekly* told us that Mac's destined dinger would descend at Busch Stadium on September 22nd, against a Houston Astros relief pitcher named Doug Henry. The networks were deep into the case, as well. Fox, which had exclusive rights to certain games declared to be "of national significance" (Major League Baseball makes this call), went on standby alert after McGwire smacked Nos. 58 and 59 on September 2nd, but ended up dividing the critical Labor Day weekend games with ESPN. (Thanks to McGwire, Fox never had to make a decision about a game on Monday, which is its "Ally McBeal" night.) Each network bringing us the great chase had relied on its own technical wizardry—those drawn-in diagrams that demystify the spin and nuance of the pitch and the arc of the mighty bat. TV is good at this stuff. The program directors also presented us with slow-motion replays of the famous homers that would fix them forever in our mind's eye, converting the bright moment into something slightly different—another collectible.

One can't quite blame sports television and its technical feats for our current state of total sports distraction, and perhaps we shouldn't blame ourselves, either. Perhaps this full-court blather over the home-run record has become more important to us than the games themselves, which suggests that the function of baseball now is simply to be historic, to remind us, through feats and statistics and the unchanging dimensions of the game, that we are still connected to Roger Maris and to Babe Ruth and their times—times that may have been simpler or more vivid than our own. It's also possible that we are preoccupied with the sideshows because we can no longer find the old fanly connection between ourselves and the extremely rich, extremely large young men we see out on the field. Back when the players stayed in place from one year to the next, they appeared to represent us on the field—not just our town but the way we would play the game, too, given a little break. Now they are lost to us, like our grown-up children—admirable or awesome at times, and anxious to please, but members of a different species.

A HOME RUN, as we know, can change everything—for the moment, at least—and, on Labor Day, McGwire's No. 61 blew all these distractions away. Baseball, caught up in a Capra movie, wore a smile on its face, and sweetness overran the field. The amiable McGwire, crossing home plate, swept his batboy son, Matt, up in his arms and then hugged his trainer, Barry Weinberg, and his manager, Tony LaRussa. Later, he and Sosa shared an *abrazo*, out by first base; their ordeal has made them friends. The ball retriever, a fan named Mike Davidson, told reporters that he planned to give it back to McGwire, and wanted only a handshake and a signed uniform jersey in return. The shot erased the doubts and bad feelings that had enfolded Maris's record for so long, and, coming, as it did, on the hundred-and-forty-fourth game of the season, did away with any notion that Ruth's sixty in a hundred and fifty-four games meant more. Perhaps now our visions of Big Mac—those knock knees and oddly staring eyes and bulging forearms, the free, open-armed swing, with the bat flipped aside (I'm done with *you*), and the soaring, diminishing white ball—will even let us get back to our game again, and to the day when one homer, and not sixty or a hundred of them, will be a thrill worth taking home with us afterward and waking up with the next morning. —ROGER ANGELL

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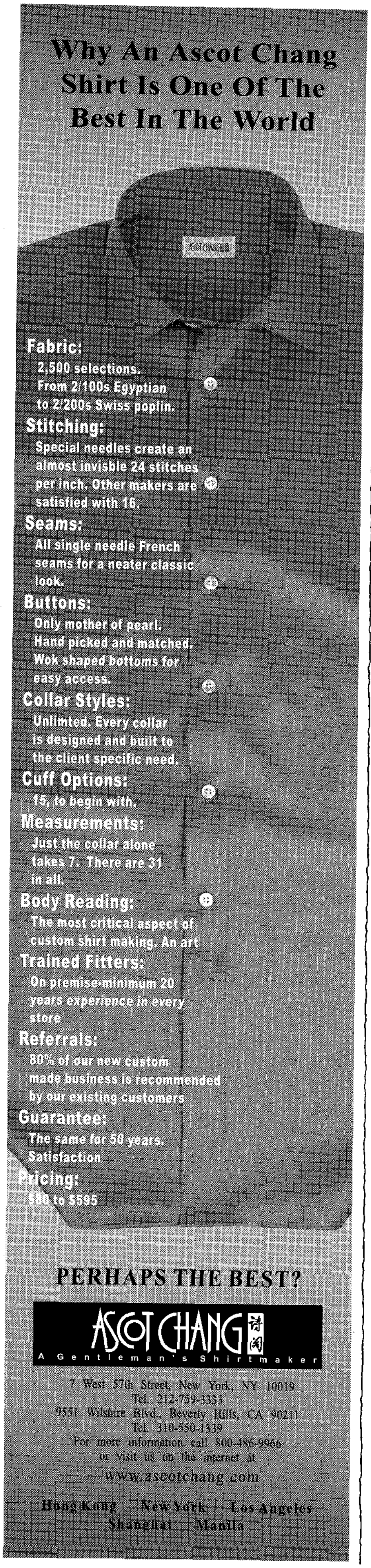
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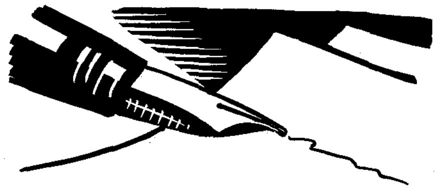

HONEST RECKONING

Philip Gourevitch writes that "a failure to reckon honestly with historical trauma, and to hold those responsible for it to account, leads to a kind of oblivion, in which memory becomes so distorted that it is lost" ("Pol Pot's Children," August 10th). Out of respect for those Cambodians who died in the years between 1969 and 1978, we should consider whether that statement should apply to the United States as well as to Cambodia. From 1969 through August of 1973, the United States bombed Cambodia devastatingly, and that devastation was one of the factors that gave the ultranationalist Khmer Rouge political leverage over an ongoing peasant rebellion. Pol Pot was on his way. Though significantly fewer Cambodians died from the bombing than from Pol Pot's genocide, surely one lesson to be learned from this article is that killing fewer people than Pol Pot did does not abate responsibility for their deaths—or for the opportunity the bombing gave Pol Pot to continue the savagery.

ALLAN MCDONELL, Q.C.
North Vancouver, Canada

STILL UNFORGIVEN

Alex Ross laid down the agenda for what should have been discussed at the recent Bayreuth conference on Richard Wagner and the Jews but wasn't ("The Unforgiven," August 10th). I am the author of "Wagner: Race and Revolution," and was a disappointed participant in the conference, and it seemed to me that the focus there was on lifting the Israeli ban on Wagner and thereby silencing German critics of Bayreuth's ambition (pursued since the time of Wagner) to be the standard-bearer of German culture—that is, the conference was focussed on redeeming Bayreuth through Israel. I believe that it is difficult indeed to convey the unreality that even now pervades Bayreuth and thus makes any truly open discussion of Wagner and his legacy impossible. The strangest thing is that the Bayreuth directorate opened the door to such a discussion with its staging of the celebrated Chéreau production of the "Ring," in 1976. The production clearly indicated the ways in which the cycle is soaked in anti-Semitic mentality and sensibility. It is a great pity that the directorate has since lost its nerve.

PAUL LAWRENCE ROSE
University Park, Pa.

Would we have any less difficulty rejecting Wagner if he had murdered people with his own hands? Too often in our culture, we are seduced by convenience into pretending that if something did not affect us directly we should have no problem with it. I am a black American who discovered Wagner's wonderful music as an adolescent and struggled to give it up when I learned of his beliefs. It may seem paradoxical that I choose not to listen to Wagner and yet support people's freedom to play his music, but my decision (and loss) is not a condemnation of the music itself; it is a personal moral choice—one that is good practice for the harder choices we have to make.

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Troy, N.Y.

TEAM PLAYERS

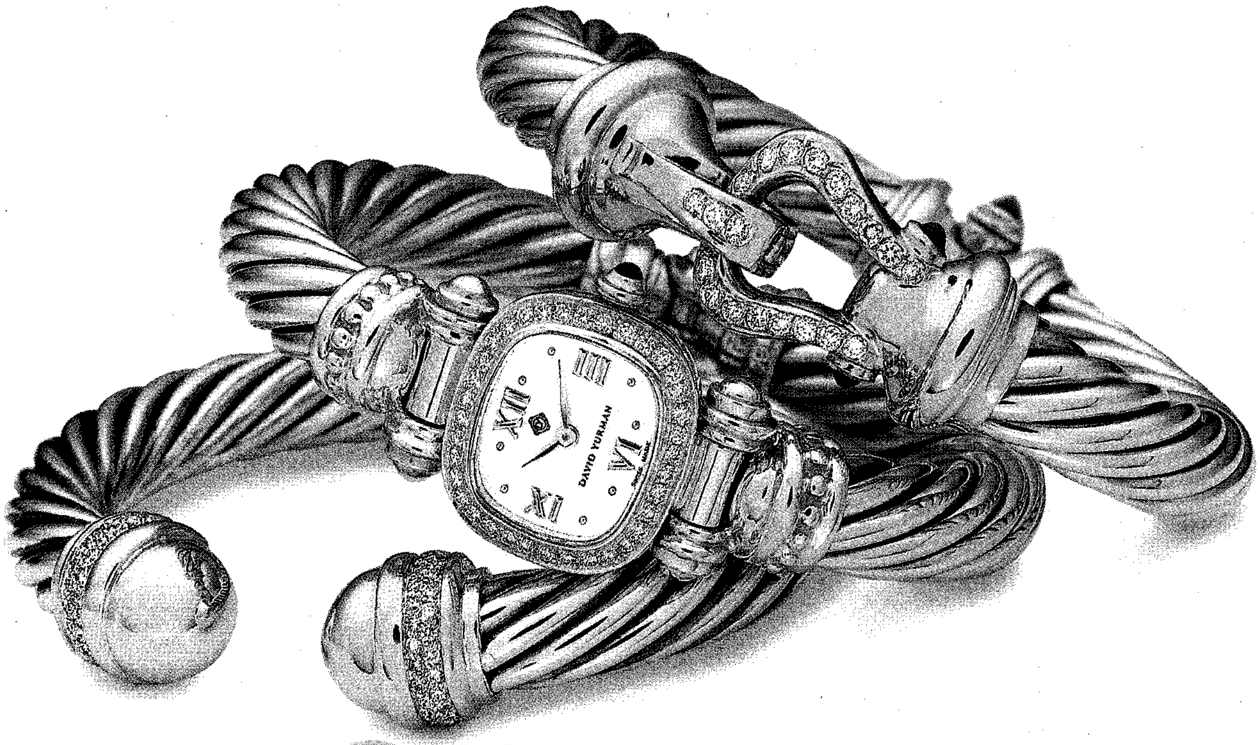
In "Front Running" (August 17th) Roger Angell overlooks a signal characteristic of this year's Yankees. The team is not a mere aggregate of talented athletes but an example of an increasingly rare commodity in professional sports: a cohesive and interdependent team.

MATTHEW S. SCHWEBER
New York City

CLARIFICATION: The photograph by William Henry Jackson in our issue of August 17th is of a train crossing Diablo Canyon—a part of the Grand Canyon system—and not the Grand Canyon itself.

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-840-8489 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

DAVID YURMAN



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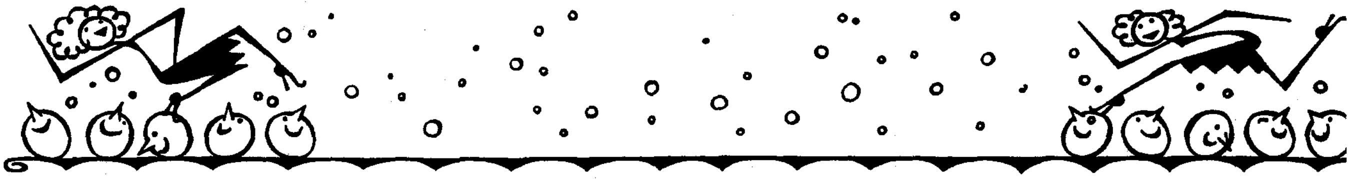

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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20	21	22				

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Culture of Desire—Dante's "Inferno" and the life of Andy Warhol inspired the director Anne Bogart's play, her second installment in the Saratoga International Theatre Institute's two-part examination of American popular culture. Opens Sept. 16 at 8. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

A Dream of Wealth—Arthur Giron's drama about an American entrepreneur in Guatemala incorporates masks, music, and ritual movement. Opens Sept. 16 at 8. (46 Walker Street Theatre, 46 Walker St. 421-1380.)

The Dying Gaul—A five-week, encore staging of Craig Lucas's latest drama, in which a married Hollywood producer seduces a naïve young writer whose screenplay he wants to buy. Previews begin Sept. 18. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

Hesh—From Naked Angels, a drama by Matthew Weiss which traces twenty years in the life of a troubled Bronx family. Previews begin Sept. 19. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 479-7304.)

Kelly—The York Theatre Company's Musicals in Mufti series of overlooked works continues with Eddie Lawrence and Moose Charlap's musical about a man who jumps off the Brooklyn Bridge on a bet. Sept. 18 at 8, Sept. 19 at 2:30 and 8, and Sept. 20 at 2:30. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Marco Polo Sings a Solo—The Signature Theatre Company opens its John Guare season with the playwright's 1977 comedy, in which a filmmaker, working on an iceberg at the end of the millennium, takes on the life story of the Italian explorer. In previews. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

Measure for Measure—A Target Margin production of Shakespeare's comedy. Previews begin Sept. 16. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 358-3657.)

The Mystery of Irma Vep—A revival of Charles Ludlam's 1984 camp thriller, directed by and starring Everett Quinton (who appeared with Ludlam in the original Ridiculous Theatrical Company production) and Stephen DeRosa. With sets by John Lee Beatty and costumes by William Ivey Long. In previews. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

A Night in November—A one-man drama by Marie Jones, which is set on the night of the 1994 World Cup qualifying soccer match between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In previews. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Oedipus—Billy Crudup and Frances McDormand lead the cast in Dare Clubb's retelling of the Greek myth. A Blue Light Theatre Company production. Previews begin Sept. 20. (CSC Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 279-4200.)

Over the River and Through the Woods—In Joe DiPietro's new comedy, a young man planning his future clashes with his four Italian-American grandparents, who have ideas of their own on the subject. Previews begin Sept. 18. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

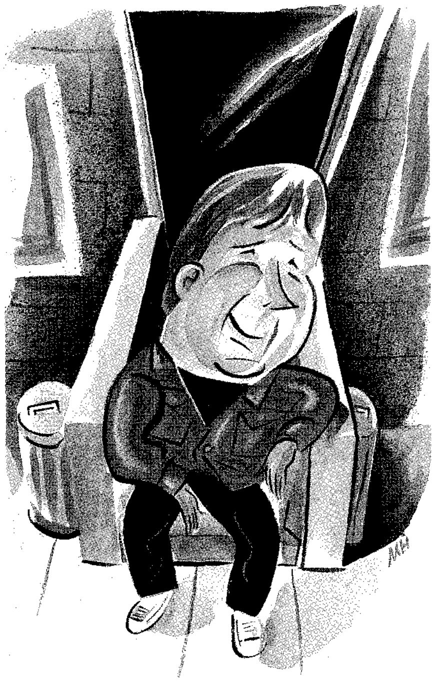
The Uneasy Chair—The owner of a boarding house (Dana Ivey) in Victorian London sues her ill-tempered boarder (Roger Rees), in a new comedy by Evan Smith. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Vegetable Love—The 29th Street Rep presents a surrealistic drama about an Irish-American family in the aftermath of the father's death, written by Tammy Ryan. In previews through Sept. 19. Opens Sept. 20 at 8. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

Wit—MCC Theatre presents the Long Wharf Theatre's staging of a dark comedy by Margaret Edson, in which a woman with cancer (Kathleen Chalfant) finds solace in the sonnets of John Donne. Preview on Sept. 16. Opens Sept. 17 at 8. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Candida—The Pearl Theatre Company begins the season with Shaw's 1903 play about marriage. Clare Davidson is the director. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)



"Colin Quinn: An Irish Wake."

Caught in the Act—The Threshold Theatre's festival of international one-acts, by playwrights both well known (Arthur Schnitzler, Fernando Arrabal, Dario Fo) and obscure. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Oct. 4.)

Colin Quinn: An Irish Wake—The "Saturday Night Live" star's multicharacter one-man show was inspired by the Brooklyn neighborhood he lived in during the seventies. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 19.)

Collected Stories—In a splendid performance, Uta Hagen plays an aging writer who tells her protégée (Lorca Simons) the one story about her own life which she hasn't written. Complications, naturally, ensue. Unfortunately, other than providing a showcase for Ms. Hagen, this revival of Donald Margulies's 1997 drama only points out how poorly constructed the relationship between the two women is, and it is made even less believable by Ms. Simons' overly mannered, pouty acting. Directed by William Carden, with a marvellous, airy set by Ray Recht. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Communicating Doors—A delightful farce with a fairy-tale ending, by Alan Ayckbourn. As with all good farce, the central conceit is serious and quite ridiculous at the same time; in this case, it involves murder and time travel. An exuberant cast, led by the wittily unflappable Patricia Hodges and including Mary-Louise Parker and David McCallum, makes the most of David Gallo's lovely set (which has six doors, good for slamming, hiding behind, and hitting miscreants with). Christopher Ashley's direction makes the precise framework of the plot clear without ever dampening the high spirits. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 13th St. 239-6200.)

Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late blues singer Dinah Washington, starring Lillias White. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

International Festival of Puppet Theatre—The biennial series of avant-garde works continues through Sept. 27, with twenty-eight productions—including "A Harlot's Progress," by New York's Theodora Skipitares; "Kwaidan," by Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts; "Ubu and the Truth Commission," by South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company; and "Short Stories," by Peru's Teatro Hugo & Ines—staged at seventeen venues throughout the city. (For more information about performances and venues, call 439-7529, ext. 1998.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—This revue by Frank McCourt is a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Nijinsky Speaks—A one-man memory play, written and performed by Leonard Crofoot, in which the celebrated dancer looks back on his life from the confines of an insane asylum. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

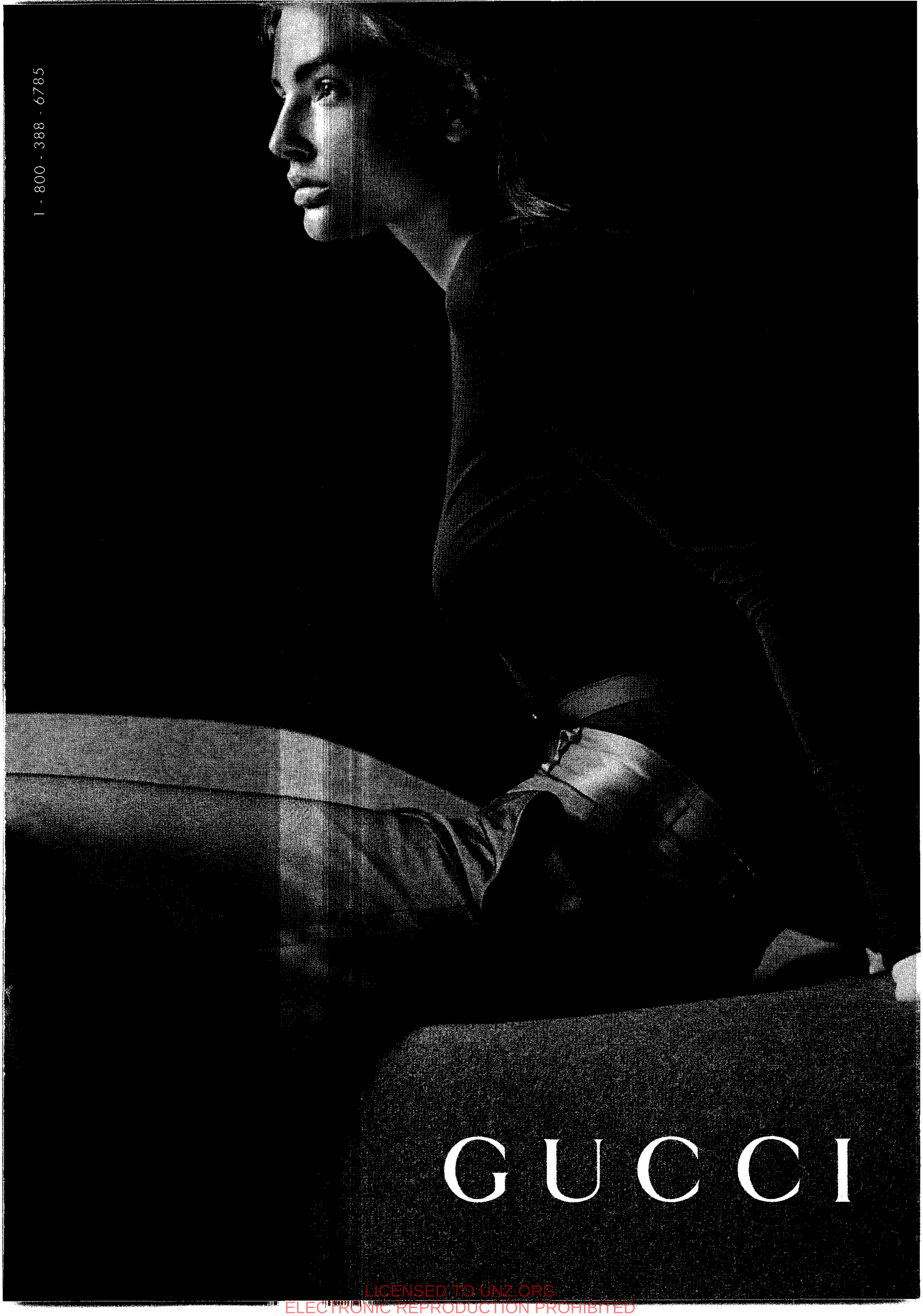
Nunsense A-Men—An all-male version of Dan Goggin's 1985 musical comedy, "Nunsense." (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Power Plays—Three short plays, two written by Elaine May and one by Alan Arkin, who originally performed them with Jeannie Berlin and Anthony Arkin, their respective offspring. The show re-opens on Sept. 22, with Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentiss taking over for Alan Arkin and Ms. May. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Sakina's Restaurant—Aasif Mandvi portrays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian community in New York. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

The Secret History of the Lower East Side—En Garde Arts continues its tradition of site-specific stagings with an evening of commissioned one-acts ("The Patron Saint of the Nameless Dead," by Carlos Murillo; "New Culture for a New Country," by Alice Tuan; and "Hester Street Hideaway: A Lower East Side Love Story," by Peter Ullian), performed on the roof of Seward Park High School and accompanied by a chorus of Lower East Siders and Seward Park students. Directed by Matt Wilder. (350 Grand St., at Essex St. 279-4200.)

MARCELLUS HALL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GUCCI

Smoke on the Mountain—In this sweet and funny musical comedy, set on a Saturday night in June, 1938, the Mount Pleasant (North Carolina) Baptist Church awaits the arrival of the Sanders Family singers and musicians. The show features Mike Craver and Mark Hardwick's tuneful, often bluegrass arrangements of songs like "Bringing in the Sheaves," "I'll Fly Away," and "Rock of Ages." (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Sound of Music—Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/6/98.) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Stupid Kids—The WPA Theatre's production of John C. Russell's dark comedy of suburban-teen angst. Michael Mayer is the director. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Symphonie Fantastique—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. This isn't rubber-duckie performance art; just as dance can make space a palpable presence onstage, the show's creator, Basil Twist, uses feathers, streamers, mirrors, bubbles, and sophisticated lighting to do the same for water. And, as in dance, the movement illuminates the music. A peerless, delightful evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

They Still Mambo in Havana—A political drama by Rogelio Martinez, in which Cuban exiles attempt to return home. (The Flea, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051. Closes Sept. 27.)

The Tramway End—A drama by Dermot Bolger, about an Irish expatriate living in Germany. (Chelsea Playhouse, 125 W. 22nd St. 388-2806. Closes Sept. 20.)

Villa Villa—Theatre as mosh pit. The Argentinean troupe De La Guarda herds you into a crowded space, performs undistinguished rock music, swings on ropes over your head, and splashes you until you're drenched. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.)

The Weatherbox—Rattlestick Productions' season opener is a family drama by Travis Baker. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 675-5634.)

You Shouldn't Have Told—A drama about an urban, middle-class black family shaken by sexual abuse, written by Anne L. Thompson-Scretching. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Zingaro—The French equestrian troupe returns to New York with "Eclipse," a new show featuring twenty-six horses, eighteen performers, and a Korean folk-music ensemble. (Big Top at Battery Park City. 718-636-4100.)

LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CABARET:** Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **R & J:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **VISITING MR. GREEN:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.

DANCE

Julio Bocca and Ballet Argentino—In his native Argentina, the charismatic Bocca enjoys a brand of fame that's rare for danseurs nobles—he and his fifteen-member company, Ballet Argentino, once filled the soccer stadium Luna Park with eighty thousand balletomanes. For its Northern Hemisphere season, the company performs a variety of works that promise to be equally crowd-pleasing, including "Cautivos," set to the percussion of Kodo, and "Concertango," set to the music of Atilio Stampone. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Sept. 16-19 at 8 and Sept. 20 at 3.)

"Safe Harbor"—In a site-specific performance that takes the audience along the Red Hook waterfront into a harbor barge, then back through the neighboring streets to Pier 41, the choreographer Martha Bowers and her company, Dance/Theatre/Etcetera, weave together various dance and theatrical traditions to tell the story of the Irish, Italian, Puerto Rican, and African-American people who have called the area home. (Pier 41, 204-207 Van Dyke St., Brooklyn. Sept. 18-20 at 7. No tickets necessary; for reservations for bus transportation from Brooklyn or Manhattan, call 989-6830.)

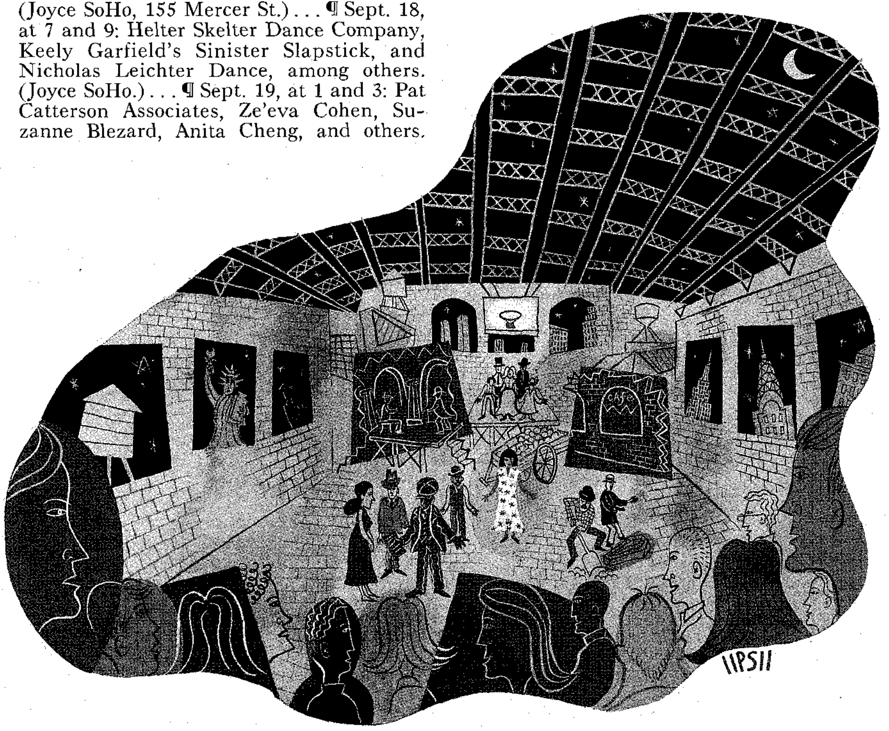
"Dance Now 98"—The Downtown Arts Festival calls in the troupes for a fortnight of dance. Sept. 17, at 7 and 9: Aleta Hayes and Dancers, Mark Jarecke, and Robin Staff & Felicia Norton, among others. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St.) . . . ¶ Sept. 18, at 7 and 9: Helter Skelter Dance Company, Keely Garfield's Sinister Slapstick, and Nicholas Leichter Dance, among others. (Joyce SoHo.) . . . ¶ Sept. 19, at 1 and 3: Pat Catterson Associates, Ze'eva Cohen, Suzanne Blezard, Anita Cheng, and others. (Joyce SoHo.) . . . At 2: Danças/Brasil in "Jogo de Dentro" ("Inside Play"). (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St.) . . . At 8: Jane Comfort & Company, Doug Elkins Dance Company, Susan Marshall & Company, and Richard Move, among others. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St.) . . . ¶ Sept. 20, at 5 and 7: Paige Martin, Cherylyn Lavagnino, Torque Dance, and others. (Gallery Henoch, 80 Wooster St.) . . . At 4 and 6:30: Shumka Dance/Theatre Company in "Missing Objects: A Deconstructed Love Story." (Charas/El Bohio, 205 E. 9th St.) (For complete program information, call 925-4200. Tickets available at the door.)

"Toilet (formerly known as A Life of Living Together)"—An evening-length collaboration between choreographer Wen Hui and filmmaker Wu Wenguang which meditates on the lives of twenty-somethings in China's big cities. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742. Sept. 18-19 at 8.)

Urban Artworks—The sixth installment of the dance showcase offers works by eight choreographers, including "Rosie the Riveter," by Mary Bruce Blackburn; "Scriptures and Nails," by Trebien Pollard; and "Plunge," by Lauren Slaiman. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. For reservations, call 888-783-1242. Sept. 18-19 at 8 and Sept. 20 at 3.)

Pilar Rioja—The contessa of Spanish dance returns for her twenty-sixth season with a program rich in works inspired by Federico Garcia Lorca to celebrate the centennial of his birth. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Sept. 16-17 at 7, Sept. 18 at 8, and Sept. 20 at 3. Through Oct. 4.)

The Bessies—Varla Jean Merman and Doug Elkins host the fourteenth annual New York dance and performance awards, which features better posture than the Tonys, longer speeches than the Oscars, more sincere surprise than either (winners don't even know they were nominated), and actual worthwhile performances: this year, Philadanco performs Ron Brown's "Gate Keepers," and Doug Varone and Dancers appear in excerpts from "Bel Canto." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. For reservations, call 691-6500. Sept. 18 at 7.)



"The Secret History of the Lower East Side," an En Garde Arts joint.

PETER SELGIN

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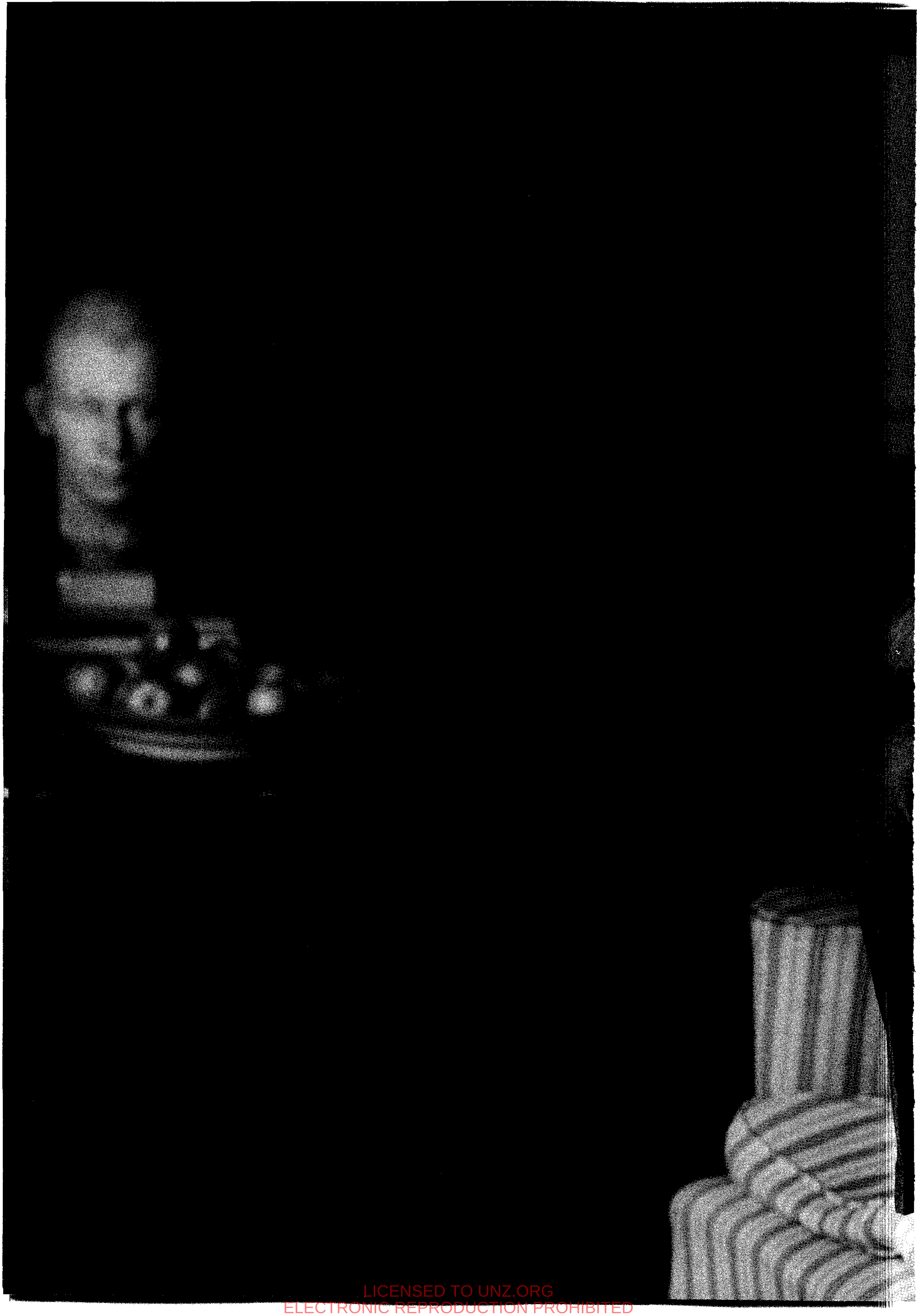

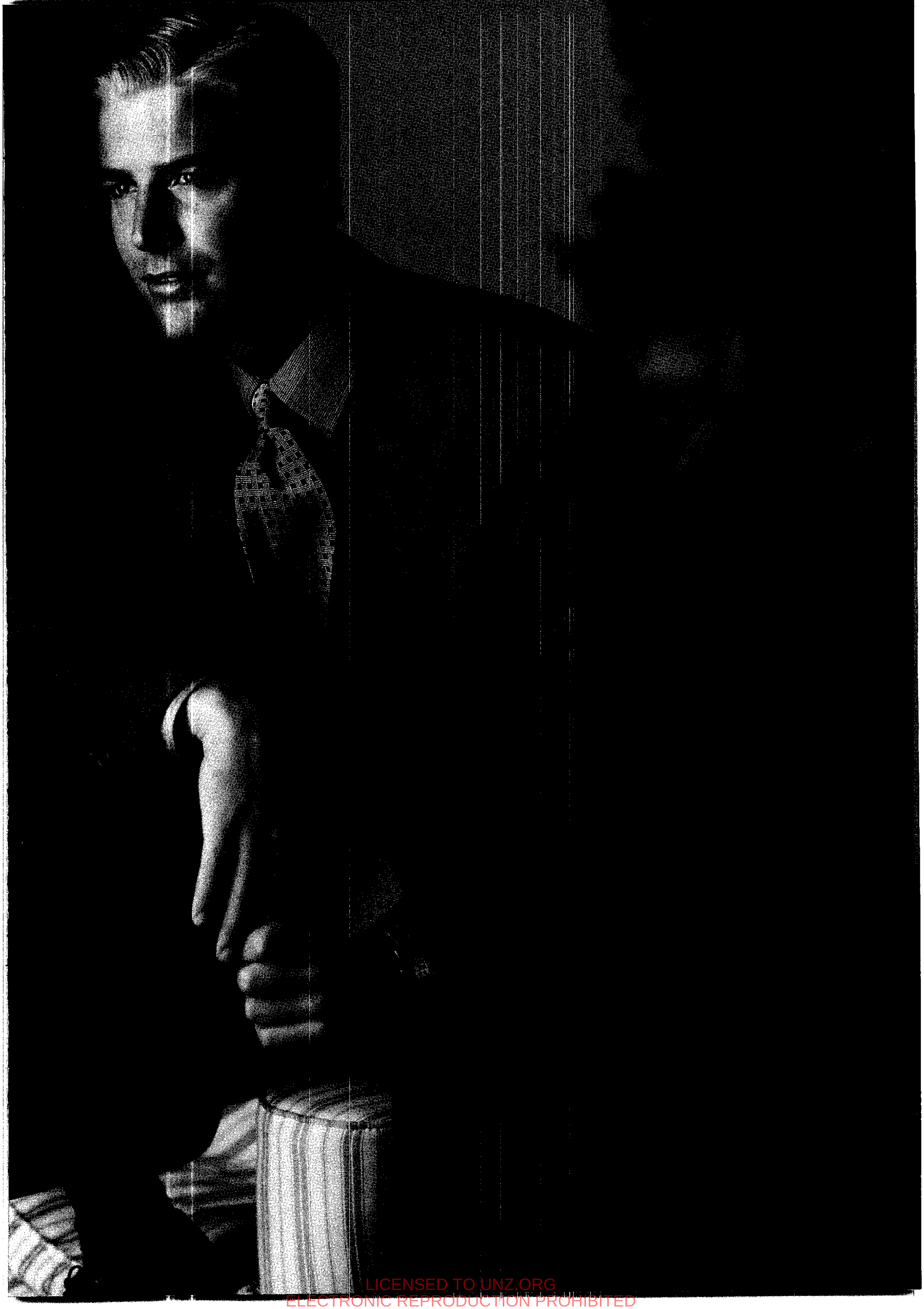

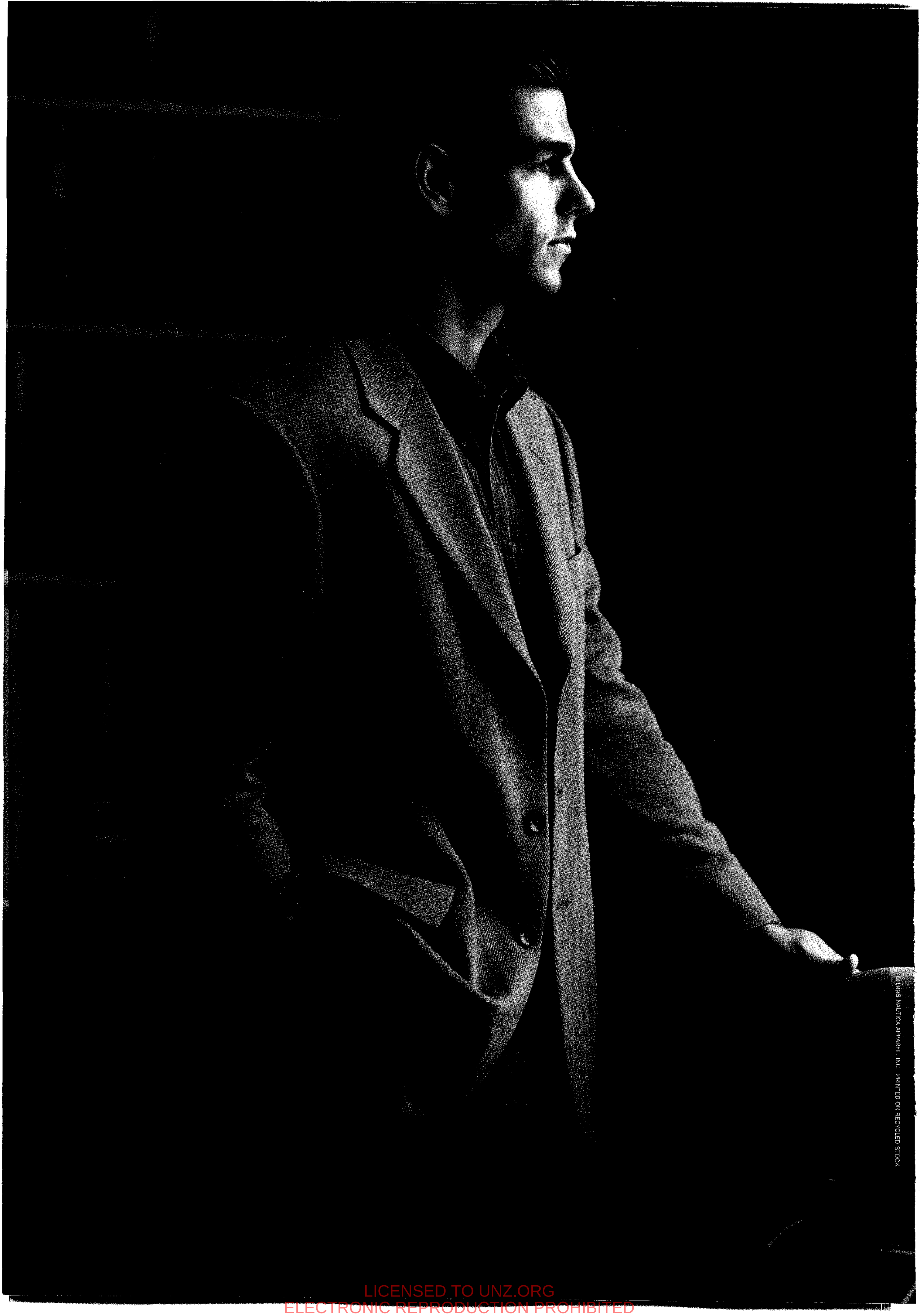

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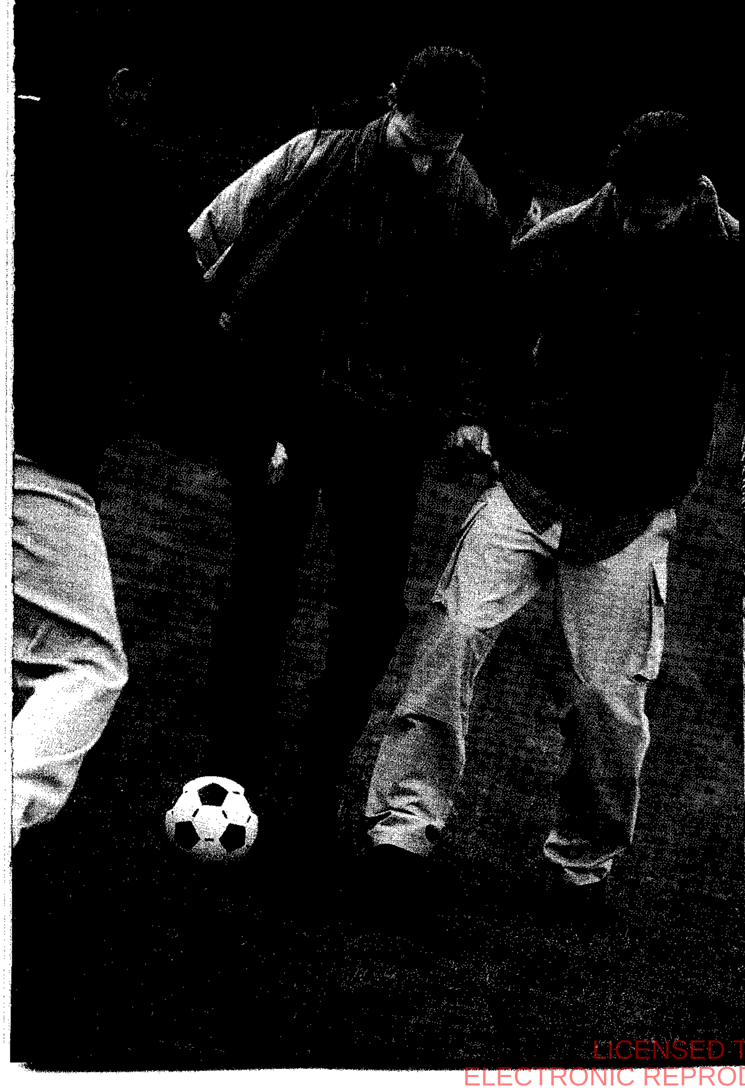

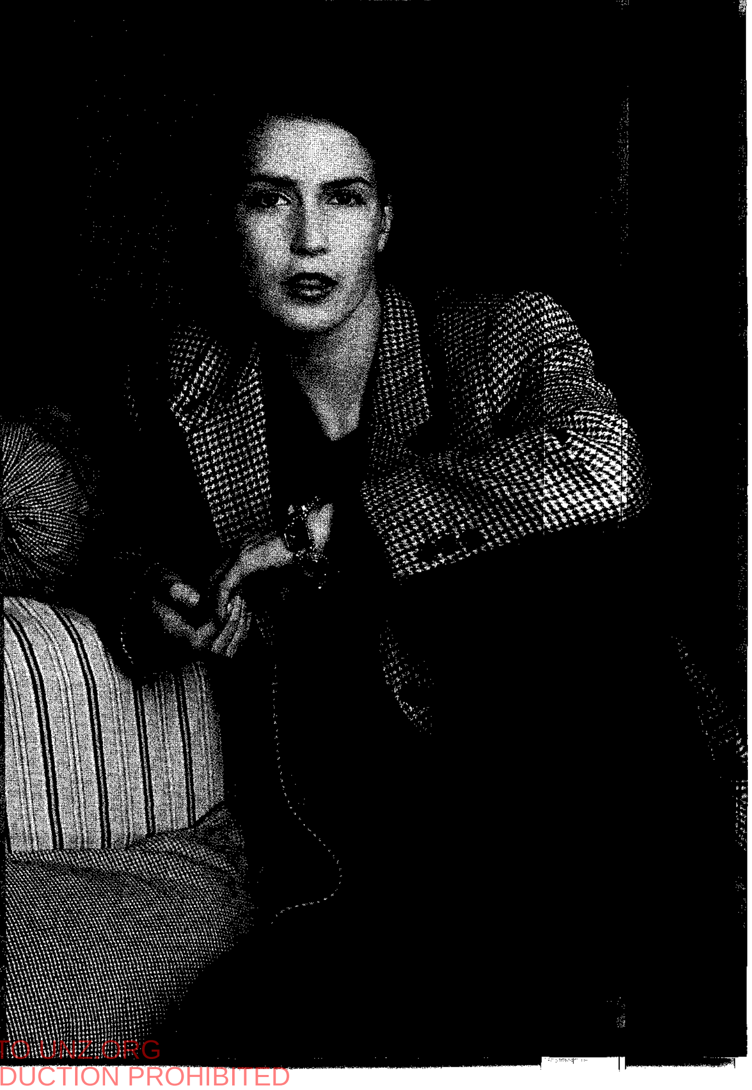

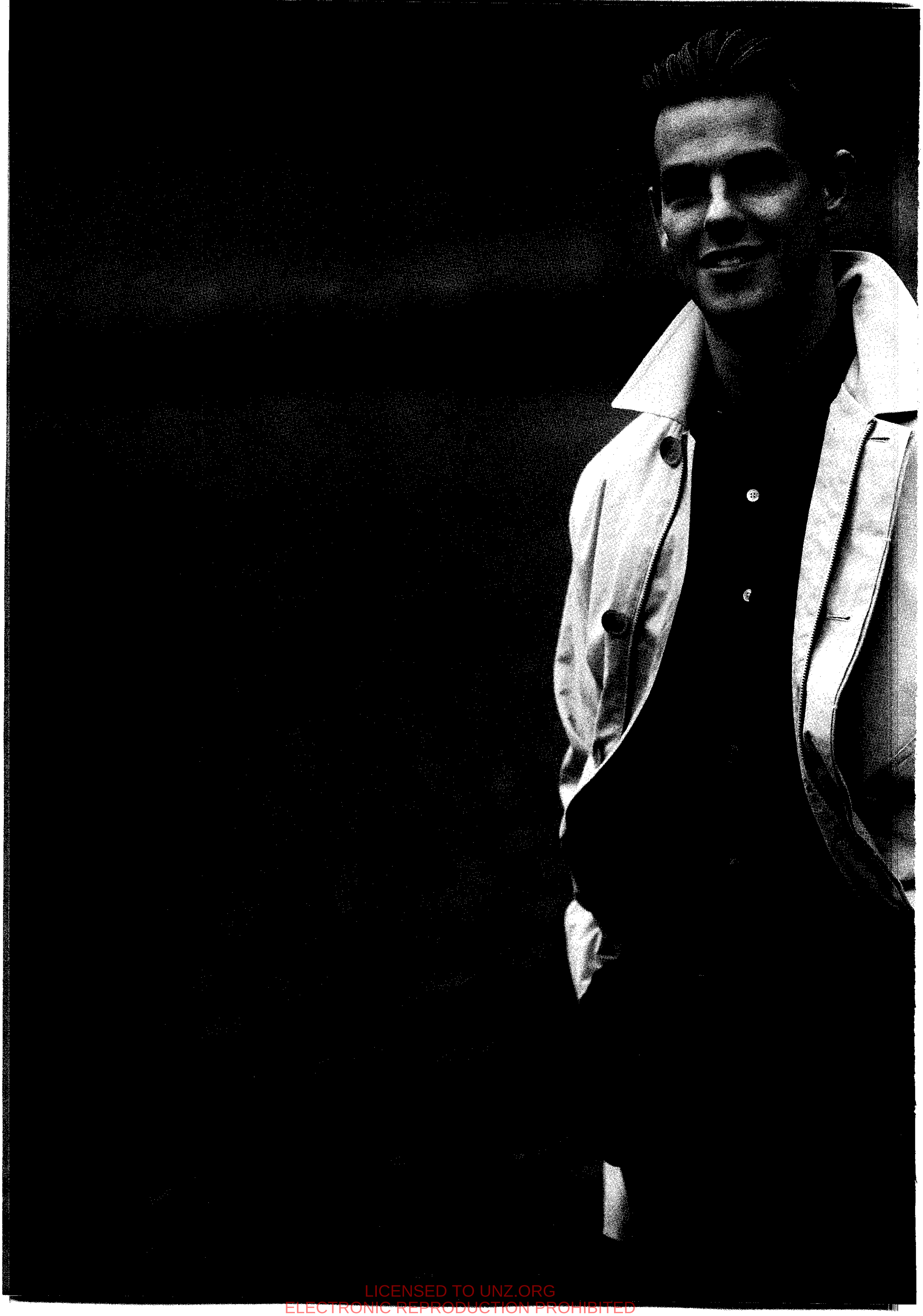

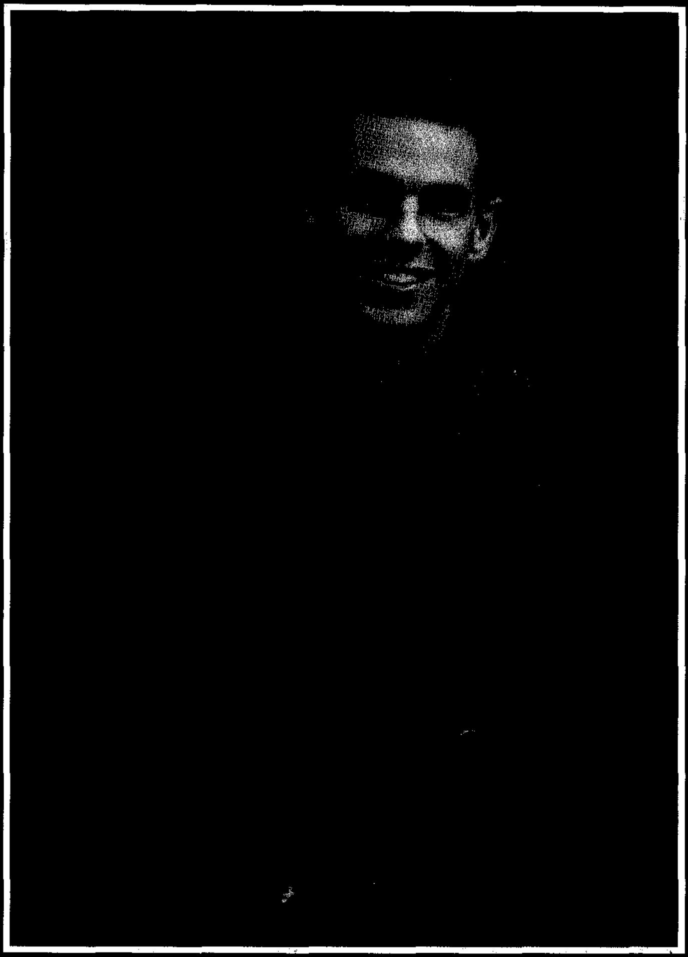

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Hootie & the Blowfish—Why soldier on when you've sold fifteen million records and privately entertained the Clintons? America's best-selling mediocrities return with "Musical Chairs," the third record in a career that will eventually be of interest purely to students of mass hypnosis. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Sept. 16 at 7:15.)

Tripping Daisy / Bradford Reed—Three years after its minor hit "I Got a Girl," this Dallas quintet returns to its punk roots with its latest album, "Jesus Hits Like the Atom Bomb." / Fifteen years ago, Bradford Reed built a peculiar, double-necked string instrument fit with four bells and six pickups and called it a pencilina, because he first played it with a pencil. Reed can often be found performing before bewildered crowds on downtown sidewalks, but this is a prime chance to sit back and properly experience his signature sound—something like an ethereal slide guitar—as he plucks, strikes, and strokes away at his creation. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Sept. 17 at 8.)

Jazz at Lincoln Center—Some fifty years into an unassuming yet brilliant career, pianist Hank Jones has become a contemporary version of his early model, Teddy Wilson: each silken phrase is guaranteed to be perfect in form and diction. But Jones's ambition and repertoire continue to expand. He's long practiced an elegant mélange of pre-swing, swing, and bop phraseology, and his continuing collaboration with younger players is proof of his commitment to keep on his toes. This well-deserved, if belated, tribute finds him on familiar ground, in the front line of a small ensemble and a big band. Jones has been around forever, but his time is now. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Sept. 17 and Sept. 19 at 8.)

Baby Jane Dexter—The downtown-cabaret veteran moves uptown, for an evening of blues and standards. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 18 at 8.)

Miriam Makeba—The great South African singer and anti-apartheid activist, best known for her work in the Broadway musical "Sarafina!" and her amazing performances on Paul Simon's "Graceland" tour, takes the stage with guests Rita Marley, Judy Mowatt, and Marcia Griffith. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Sept. 18 at 8.)

Cowboy Junkies—Those mellow Canadians. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Sept. 18 at 8.)

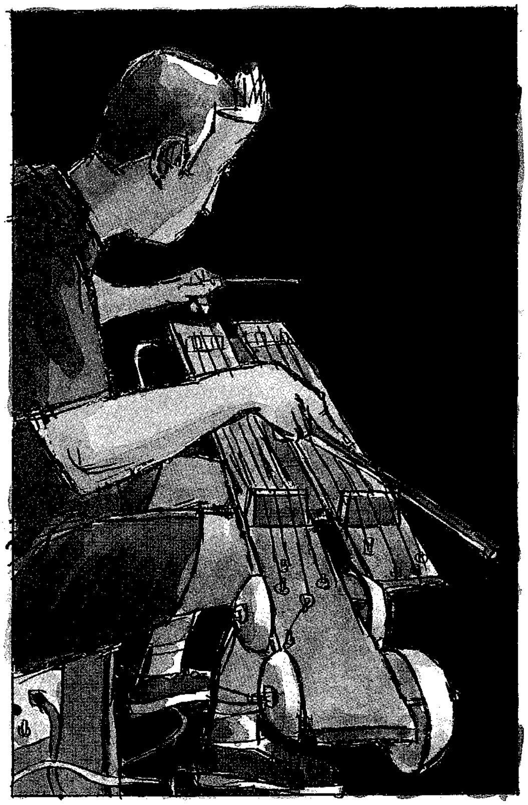
Jazz at the Flea—Sept. 18-19 at 10: The Microscopic Septet is now a fond memory, but its former pianist, Joel Forrester, has bounced back nicely. With two other members of his current quartet, People Like Us—the downtown bassist Dave Hofstra and the lyrical baritone saxophonist Claire Daly—he provides a taste of the delightful and quirky melodicism to be found on their recent recordings. . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 8: Pianist Matthew Shipp is integral to the celebratory squalls produced by terrorist tenor David S. Ware's quartet. On his own, Shipp balances his post-Cecil Taylor keyboard eruptions with passages of lyric calm. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Church St. and Broadway. 226-0051.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 18-19: The lapidary, postmodern folk of singer-songwriters **Jonatha Brooke** and **David Wilcox.** Sept. 22: **Lyle Lovett** starts a two-night stand with a list of high-profile guests, including **Robert Earl Keen, Michael Martin Murphy, Guy Clark,** and **Eric Taylor.**

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 17: The Latino-punk supergroup **Los Super 7,** featuring David Hidalgo and Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos, country hipster Joe Ely, and living (semi-) legend Freddy Fender. Sept. 18-19: **The Chemical Brothers.** The group whose electronica was once thought to be the salvation of rock and roll offers a d.j. set, spinning groovy vinyl from a variety of sources. Sept. 22: **Diamanda Galás,** whose bilingual ululation suggests a woman alternately possessed by the spirits of Tina Turner, Yoko Ono, and a Greek S & M dominatrix.



Bradford Reed brings his invention, the pencilina, to the Westbeth Theatre Center.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 22: A night of accordion high jinks, with **Guy Klucevsek, Miss Murgatroid,** and **Ted Reichman.**

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 16: **Junior Brown,** an Indiana cowboy with a flair for songs about heartbreak, hillbillies, and fools.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Sept. 17: African drum master **Baba Olatunji.** Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—**C. J. Chenier** (Sept. 20), son of the legendary zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier, upholds the traditions of that Creole dance music. Chenier the younger straps on his father's old fifty-pound piano-key accordion and leads his Red Hot Louisiana Band through a repertory of waltzes, two-steps, and joist-shaking rhythms guaranteed to make dancers kick off their shoes (and do the old man proud). If this sounds intimidating, don't fuss; dance lessons are provided before the show.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The chanteuse **Mary Cleere Haran** is in through Oct. 10, with a tribute to George Gershwin. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—As jazz institutions go, the octogenarian **Marian McPartland** (Sept. 16-17) is still pretty frisky. The vigorous elegance of her own work remains, as does the enthusiasm she extends to other musicians from her pulpit on N.P.R. This grande dame has been a steadying force on the New York scene for six decades; time flies when you're upholding the virtues of mainstream piano. Joined here by bassist Bill Crow and drummer Joe Morello, McPartland re-forms the streamlined trio that knocked 'em dead back in the mid-fifties. Sept. 18-19: The **Dave Liebman** trio. Liebman has tamed the beast. One of the handful of players brave enough to make the recalcitrant soprano saxophone his main horn (it's been the saxophonist's standard double ever since Coltrane picked it up in 1961), he has fashioned an uncommonly intelligent approach that avoids both the facileness and the modal banality that, in the hands of others, seem to be endemic to the instrument. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Alto saxophonist **David Sanborn** (here through Sept. 20) possesses one of the most passionate and individual sounds in jazz. Why he does with it what he does is between him and his accountant. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—Singer **Barbara Cook,** who still sets the standard in combining musicality with intensity, lets loose for the next three weeks. Monday nights belong to **Woody Allen and the Eddy Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** presides at the piano through Oct. 10.

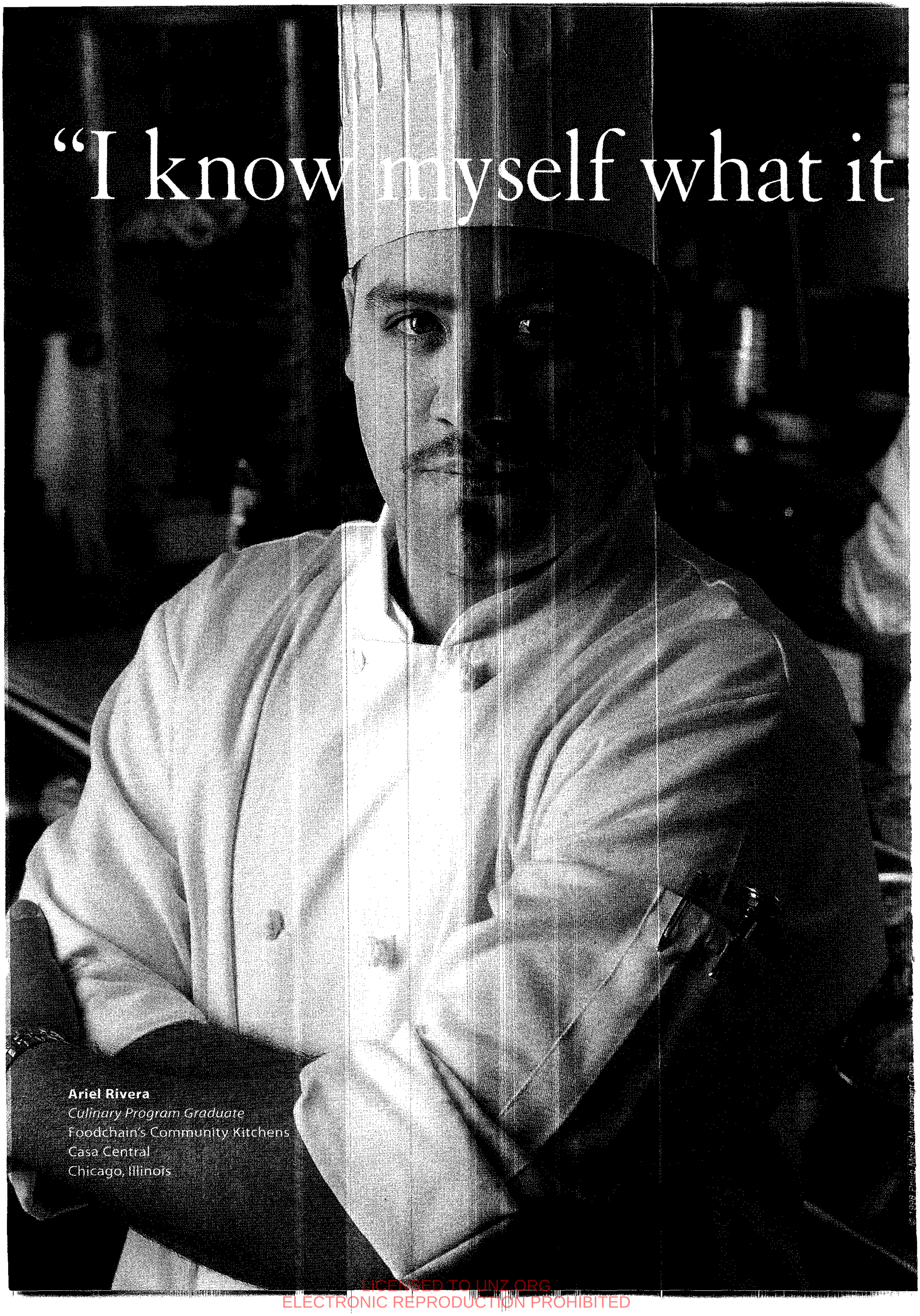
Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—If the superb saxophonist **Joe Lovano** (in through Sept. 20) will have to do without the incomparable rhythm team of drummer Elvin Jones and bassist Dave Holland from his new recording, "Trio Fascination," at least he's found two terrific runners-up: bassist **Cameron Brown** and drummer **Idris Muhammad.** The interaction among these three promises to be fast and furious and, when Lovano digs deep into a ballad, profound. Mondays are given over to electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 19: One of the advantages of growing up during the rock/R. & B. era of the nineteen-sixties is that a middle-aged jazz guitarist like **John Scofield** can now meaningfully collaborate with such retro-jazz Gen Xers as keyboardist **John Medeski** and bassist **Chris Wood** (of Medeski, Martin, and Wood), as well as with a certified soul-music legend like **Clyde Stubblefield,** the drummer who provided James Brown with some of his greasiest backbeats. No generation gap here; Scofield can kick out the jams, Stubblefield stretches himself a bit, Medeski and Wood get to test their mettle against two genuine heavyweights, and everyone goes home that much funkier.

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Sept. 19: The **Larry Coryell** quartet. By now, Coryell's flat-footed fusion work has been, one hopes, forgiven and forgotten. Always a serious player even when his taste faltered, this gifted guitarist is still finding plenty to say, whether amplified or unplugged.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—With soulful balladeering now tempering his titanic eruptions, **Pharoah Sanders** (through Sept. 20) has become the complete saxophonist. It's been quite an evolution for the roaring iconoclast who once made even late-period Coltrane sound reserved; rather than have them running for the doors, Sanders' colossal tone and naked emotiveness on tenor and soprano now embrace an audience openheartedly. In the early sixties, altoist **Sonny Simmons** (in the petite Old Office space Sept. 16-19) was a West Coast Ornette Coleman: a ferocious avant-gardist with a savage tone, rhythmic verve, and enough blues to keep it honest. But the decades passed and he retreated into footnotedom until a few

BEN KATCHOR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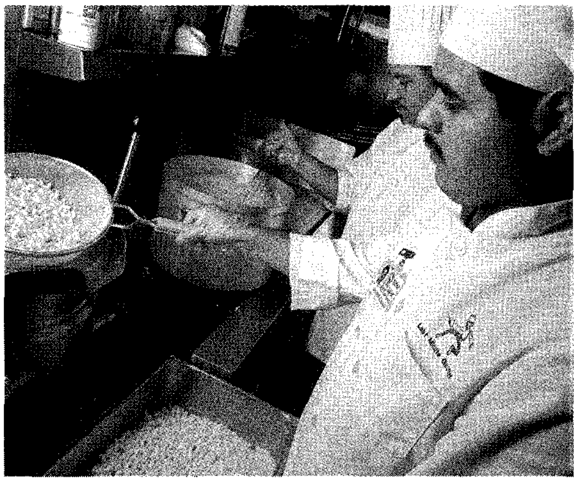

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years back, when the release of "Spirits" (on, of all things, Quincy Jones's label) signalled his return, as bloodthirsty as ever. His recent New York shows have been house-rocking affairs. His trio includes drummer **PHEEROAN AKLAFF** and bassist **JUNI BOOTH.**

Lenox Lounge, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—Sept. 18-19: The **CHARLES DAVIS** quartet. A voluble baritone saxophonist, Davis has also been heard acquitting himself admirably on the tenor and soprano horns. In working with everyone from Billie Holiday and Ben Webster to Steve Lacy and Abdullah Ibrahim, he has soaked up the kind of on-the-bandstand knowledge that you just can't buy.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—Through Sept. 19, the veteran songwriter and keyboardist **JIMMY WEBB.**

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The virtuosic small band of salsa pioneer pianist **EDDIE PALMIERI** (Sept. 21) employs the rhythmic swelter of Latin music to provide a base for fervent jazz improvisation. You'll be able to hear the rumble of pummelled keyboards and pounding congas clear down to Wall Street. Dining.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—**JAVON JACKSON** (here through Sept. 20) is no fool. With so many bright young tenor saxophonists around, he has ditched the conventional horn-and-rhythm setup on his most recent recordings and gone outré. Collaborating with Craig Street, the jazz producer of the moment, he experiments with organ, vocalists, and both acoustic and rock-ish guitars, tackling material by composers from Muddy Waters and Serge Gainsbourg to Tony Williams and Carlos Santana. Onstage, Jackson may not be able to replicate all the sonic high jinks of his disks, but his slinky improvisation is certain to make up for it. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **TOMMY FLANAGAN,** who closes out a two-week run on Sept. 20. Tone, touch, taste, technique—he's got it all in spades. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

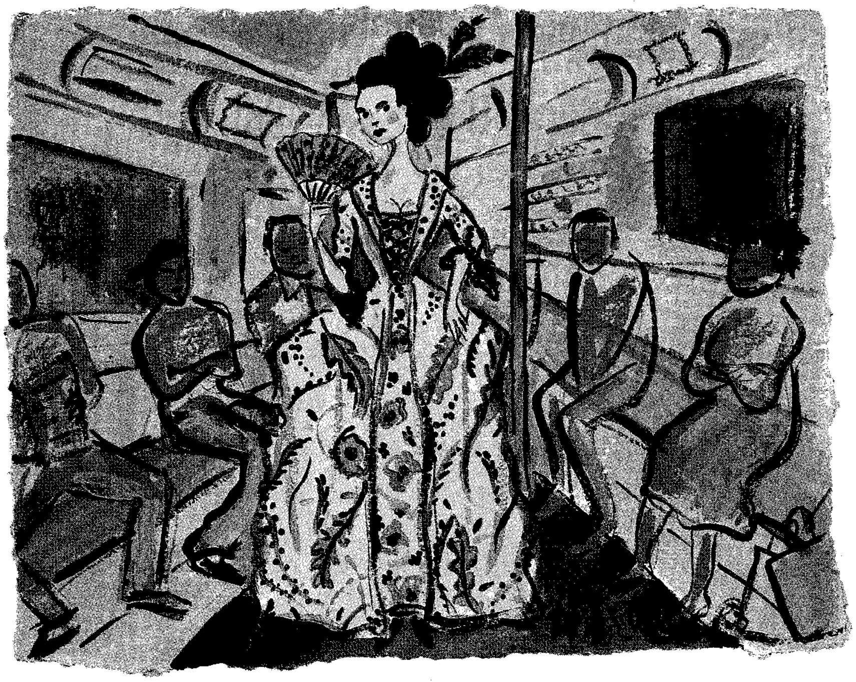
Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"The Ceaseless Century: Three Hundred Years of Eighteenth-Century Fashion" presents period outfits with their typical extravagance of effects (petticoats, stomachers, corseted waists, panniered skirts, flared peplums, etc.) alongside examples of their continuing influence, from nineteenth-century ball gowns and walking dresses to Dior cocktail dresses and Vivienne Westwood pirate ensembles. Through Nov. 29. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part II: Vegetal Patterns" identifies components of the arabesque—vine scrolls, blossoms, split leaves, and palmettes—in plant motifs from the ninth century to the eighteenth. Through Jan. 10. . . . ¶ "Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof." Through late fall. . . . ¶ "The Direct Eye," a small and unassuming show devoted to the interplay between self-taught and mainstream artists in twentieth-century art, includes works by Horace Pippin, Max Weber, and Alison Saar. Through Oct. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A retrospective devoted to the work of Pierre Bonnard. Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ "Love Forever: Yayoi Kusama, 1958-68." Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Tony Smith: Architect, Painter, Sculptor." Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ Alexander Rodchenko. Through Oct. 6. . . . ¶ "David Goldblatt: Photographs from South Africa." Through Oct. 6. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"The Art of the Motorcycle," a dazzling collection of a hundred and eleven bikes, from the late nineteenth century to the present. Through Sept. 20. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"The Hugo Boss Prize, 1998." Through Sept. 20. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The museum opens the first full-scale retrospective of Mark Rothko's work in two decades. Like many of his Abstract Expressionist peers, Rothko began his mature career making pictures indebted to European biomorphic Surrealism, before evolving his signature style of luminous, slightly spooky rectangles piled one above the other. The horizontal axis of Rothko's paintings suggests affinities with nineteenth-century Romantic landscapes; on the other hand, the broad expanses of color and severe geometric reduction look forward to the color-field and minimalist art of the sixties. The temptation is to take a bath in his luxuriant palette—to treat Rothko as an AbEx Bonnard—but one should keep in mind that the artist allied his art with the timeless and the tragic. Opens Sept. 17. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)



Enlightenment fashion in "The Ceaseless Century," at the Met's Costume Institute.

ELIZA GRAN

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Kerry James Marshall: Mementos" includes intricate and allusive paintings and sculptures (as well as a new site-specific installation) by an artist whose work is informed by events he witnessed in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, and Watts in 1965. Through Nov. 29. . . . ¶ "Martin Lewis's World: Cityscapes on Paper" compares New York cityscapes by the printmaker (1881-1962) with photographs on the same subject by some of his contemporaries. Through Oct. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—For "Excursus: Homage to the Square^3," the installation artist Robert Irwin has divided Dia's third floor into eighteen rooms with fine mesh-scrim walls, varying the effect in each of the translucent chambers with a spectrum of gels and fluorescent light. . . . ¶ "Joseph Beuys: Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci, and Sculpture." Nearly a hundred drawings inspired by Leonardo's sketchbooks, as well as three sculptures, and performance regalia from "Aus Berlin." (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Barney Tobey of *The New Yorker,*" forty-three original drawings by the cartoonist, complete with step-by-step examples of the collaborative process between artist and gag writer. Through Jan. 9. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Alan Bray—The hard-edged naturalism of this painter from Maine holds an enigmatic emotional turf: the nature he depicts (in springtime thaw or high summer) possesses a lyrical surface beauty, but the flat, chalky color and the almost mindless precision of his patterns make one wonder if there isn't a terrible nihilism lurking as well. "Black Stream" reduces the surface of the water to distinctly outlined puddles, in a very limited palette of crimson, maroon, and mauve, like a paint-by-numbers landscape. Through Oct. 3. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122.)

Ward Davenny—Richly rendered black-and-white landscapes in charcoal and pastel, suggesting the rugged optimism of British Romanticism: sunlight streams in theatrical ways, and a lone tree on the horizon takes on spectral meaningfulness. "Temple of Hay" transforms a heap of baled hay into a monumental construction resembling a masterpiece of Incan masonry. Two of the drawings are richly colored urban scenes, one a searing image of smokestacks against a red sky. Through Sept. 19. (Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669.)

John Dubrow / Sidney Goodman—Breathtaking aerial views of Lower Manhattan—and Brooklyn, Staten Island, the Harbor, and New Jersey—painted from the eighty-fifth floor of the World Trade Center. The city is conceived as a painterly patchwork of dingy smudges, but the over-all effect is magnificent. / Oil paintings of the human figure in contrived situations. A zaftig nude woman with a clown's head popping up in just the right spot, men who look like Eastern European soccer fans falling into a niche containing a sugary version of Bernini's St. Teresa. Goodman is a skillful painter, but his work is overwhelmed by gimmicks. Through Sept. 26. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays.)

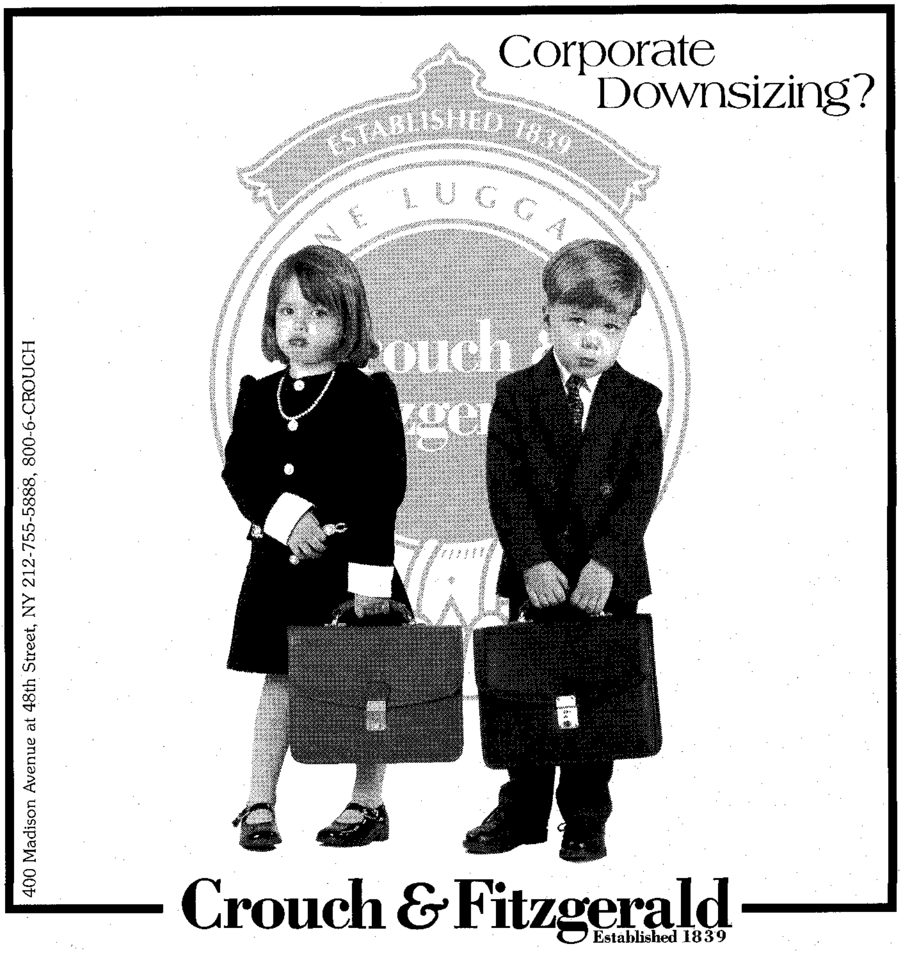
ONLY CONNECT

Save Mr. Toad's Wild Ride (http://www.savetoad.com)—This humble site chronicles the efforts of a few to prevent the destruction of one of Walt Disney World's most beloved attractions. In its original incarnation, at California's Disneyland, Mr. Toad's Wild Ride (taken from the vehicular adventures of the gentleman fool of Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows") achieved cult status. It was a favorite of acidheads in the sixties, beloved for both its frenetic pace and its sharp, un-Disney-like turns. (At the climax, the out-of-control car descends into Hell.)

The Disney World version, in Florida, drew an equally devoted (if less dosed) following, some of whom were appalled last October to hear that the ride was doomed. A small band (now known as Team Toad) began gathering weekly at the park to protest. The "Toad Ins" are recounted here (you'll also find links to numerous Mr. Toad sites) by the group's impassioned, if somewhat inarticulate, leader. "I'm not much of a spokesman," he admits. "I'm just someone who cares more about the Magic Kingdom than Eisner does."

For a long time, the folks at Walt Disney World didn't admit any plans to destroy the ride, but they didn't exactly deny the possibility, either. As Team Toad grew more organized, park security reportedly grew peevish, alarmed in part by the group's T-shirt message: "Ask Me Why Mickey Is Killing Mr. Toad." According to Toad In reports, other park staffers were more sympathetic. Benjamin Franklin (the Disney version) praised the team as "revolutionary spirits"—though Captain Hook allegedly drew his hook across his throat to indicate that Toad was toast. Alas, Hook was right. On September 7, the geniuses at Disney closed the great amusement-park attraction to make room for a Winnie-the-Pooh ride, honoring a honey-sucking bear over the intrepid Toad. For comfort, Team Toad need only remember Toad's song of himself: "The clever men at Oxford / Know all that there is to be knowed. / But they none of them know one half as much / As intelligent Mr. Toad!"

"Julien Levy (1906-81): Portrait of an Art Gallery"—A selection of paintings, photographs, and ephemera relating to Levy's gallery, which pioneered the Surrealist sensibility in America. From 1931 to 1949, Levy showed works by Joseph Cornell, Max Ernst, Frida Kahlo, Man Ray, and a host of others. These were the years in which the young Abstract Expressionists imbibed the effects and motifs of Surrealism before beginning their breakthrough achievements. Perhaps more than anyone else, Levy promoted the gallery not just as a space to show art but, with his innovative cocktail receptions, as a smart social hub. Levy was similarly prescient with regard to the Pop art of the future: in 1938, he organized a show of animation art from Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Through Oct. 31. (Equitable, Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. 554-4818. Open Mondays.)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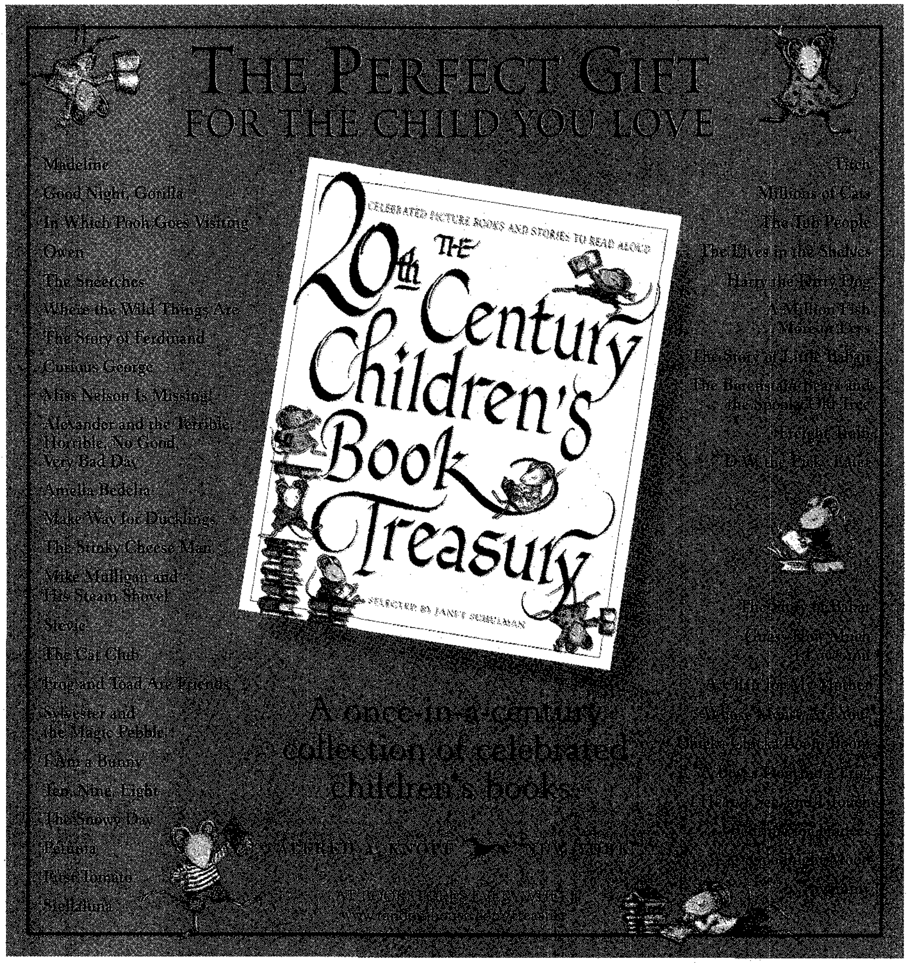
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Short List—**HARRIS DIAMANT,** Giampietro, 25 E. 73rd St. 861-8571. Through Oct. 10. . . . **CLAUDIA FITCH,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through Oct. 17. . . . **SHARON HORVATH** and **MERVYN PEAKE,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Both shows through Oct. 10. . . . **DAVID KROLL,** Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323. Through Oct. 3. . . . **JOHN LAUB,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through Oct. 10. . . . **JASON MARTIN,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through Oct. 10. . . . **KENNETH NOLAND,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. 752-0124. Through Oct. 17. . . . **ALEXANDER RODCHENKO,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through Oct. 17. . . . **BETYE SAAR** and **CHARMION VON WIEGAND,** Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Both shows through Oct. 31.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

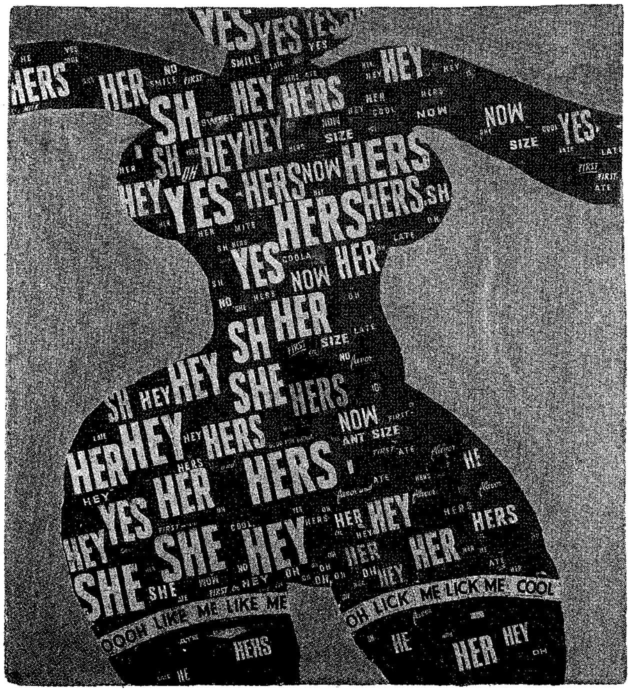
Short List—**LYNDA BENGLIS,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through Oct. 10. . . . **MIGUEL CALDERÓN,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Oct. 17. . . . **MAT COLLISHAW,** Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144. Through Oct. 17. . . . **ELISABETH CONDON,** Coploff, 526 W. 26th St. 741-1149. Through Oct. 17. . . . **CARL D'ALVIA,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Oct. 10. . . . **ERIK A. FRANDSEN,** DCA Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-5511. Through Oct. 17. . . . **BARBARA GALLUCCI,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Through Oct. 10. . . . **JONATHAN HAMMER,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through Oct. 24. . . . **ROB HORNSBY,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Oct. 10. . . . **FANG LIJUN,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Oct. 10. . . . **SARAH LUCAS,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300. Through Oct. 17. . . . **ROBERT MELEE,** Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through Oct. 10. . . . **JOHN MORRIS,** D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Through Oct. 3. . . . **HIRONORI MURAI,** Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225. Through Oct. 17. . . . **BRIGITTE NAHON,** Cristinerose, 529 W. 20th St. 206-0297. Through Oct. 10. . . . **BLAKE RAYNE,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through Oct. 10. . . . **DAMIEN SMITH,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Oct. 17. . . . **TUNGA,** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through Oct. 24. . . . **LESLIE WAYNE,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through Oct. 10.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Beck & Al Hansen—Al Hansen, the father of Happenings, turns out to be the grandfather of Beck, the omnicompetent pop troubadour. Their art work appears in a two-man show called "Playing with Matches," and while some of the revelations are not surprising (Beck favors assemblage, and he's not as good at it as his grandpa) it is a pleasure to see the younger generation going to school on his forebear's hilarious kitchen-counter art (nudes made of cardboard, cigarettes, fava beans, Hershey wrappers, and, of course, matches). Through Oct. 24. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

Alix Lambert—The artist taught herself tattooing and enlisted friends to provide skin space and subject matter. She then photographed the resulting testaments to friendship and faith in the learning curve, displayed here. Through Oct. 10. (Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200.)

Maya Lin—Lin achieved enormous renown in the early eighties when she won the competition for the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., while still an undergraduate at Yale. On the evidence of this show, she should confine herself to architecture. Apparently, Lin worked with advanced technologies to generate some of these works, but the overwhelming impression is of extravagant means deployed for derivative effect. "Phases of the Moon," for example, consists of eight beeswax disks that recall the work of the German minimalist-inclined sculptor Wolfgang Laib, while "Avalanche" is an immense mound of glass shards that recalls the sixties earthworks of Robert Smithson somewhat less than it does the candy piles of Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Through Oct. 31. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Square E. 998-6780.)



"Calliope Venus," by Al Hansen, in an exhibition of works by Beck and Al, at Thread Waxing Space.

Short List—**TERRY ADKINS** and **DOTTY ATTIE,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Both shows through Oct. 10. . . . **JAYASHREE CHAKRAVARTY,** the Drawing Room, 40 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through Oct. 22. . . . **JOE FYFE,** Davies, 23 Commerce St. 243-6840. Through Oct. 10. . . . **CADENCE GIERSBACH,** Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through Oct. 17. . . . **GEORG HEROLD,** Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338. Through Oct. 31. . . . **WADE HOEFER,** Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through Oct. 17. . . . **ALEXANDER KALETSKI,** Dillon, 431 West Broadway. 966-2977. Through Oct. 5. . . . **HOON KWAK,** Cowles, 420 West Broadway. 925-3500. Through Oct. 3. . . . **SANTI MOIX,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through Oct. 10. . . . **ALLAN WEXLER,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through Oct. 10. . . . **LISA YUSKAVAGE,** Boesky, 51 Greene St. 941-9888. Through Oct. 10.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—Sept. 16: Classical Chinese furniture, ceramics, and other works. . . . ¶ Sept. 17: Southeast Asian art. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . At **CHRISTIE'S EAST:** Sept. 16: Moderately priced jewelry. . . . ¶ Sept. 22: European and Asian decorative art. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

Sotheby's—Sept. 16-17: Indian and Southeast Asian art, including an exceptional southern-Indian bronze Shiva-as-Nataraja from the late eleventh or early twelfth century and a Nepalese gilt-bronze Buddha from about a

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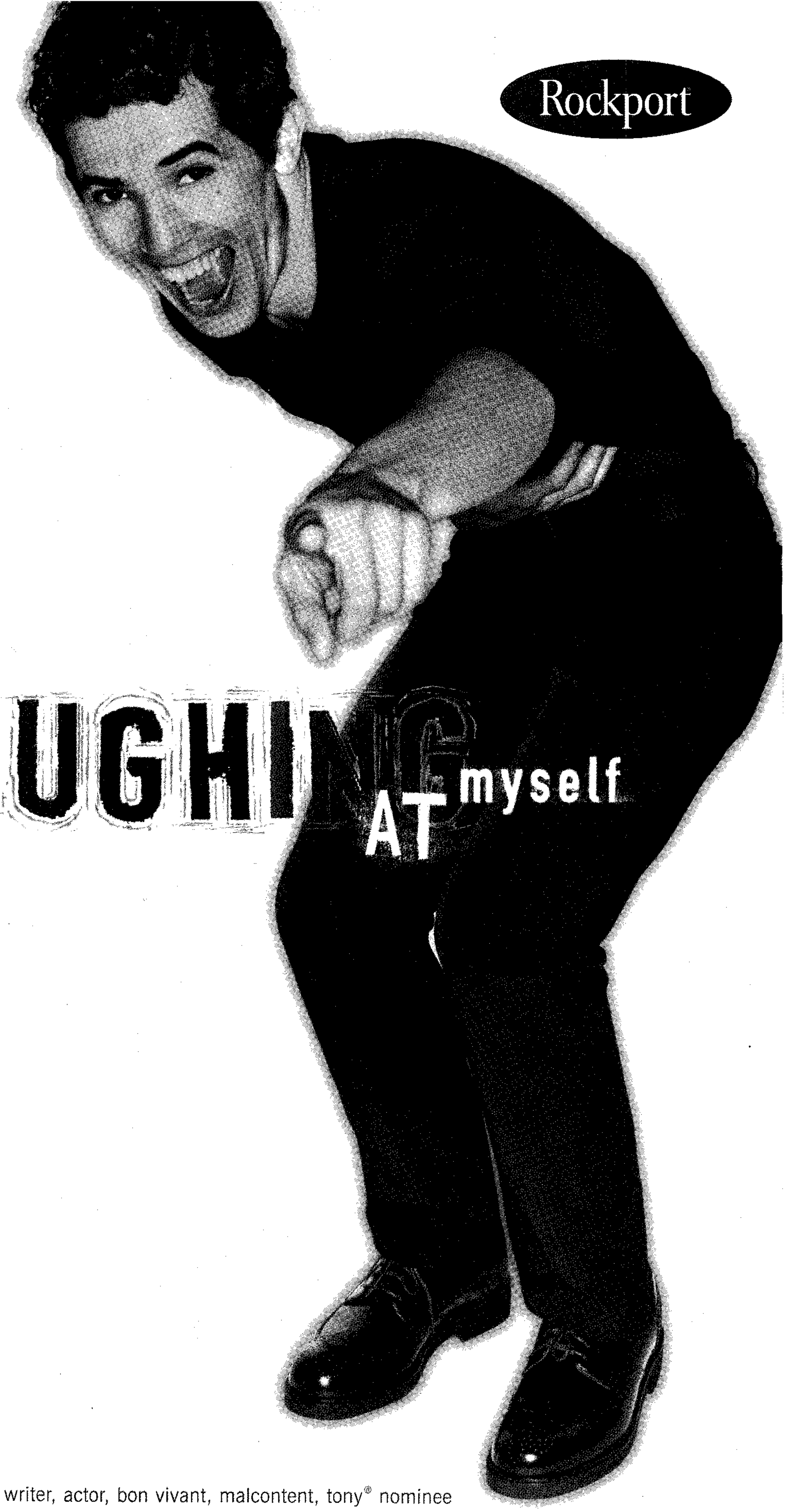

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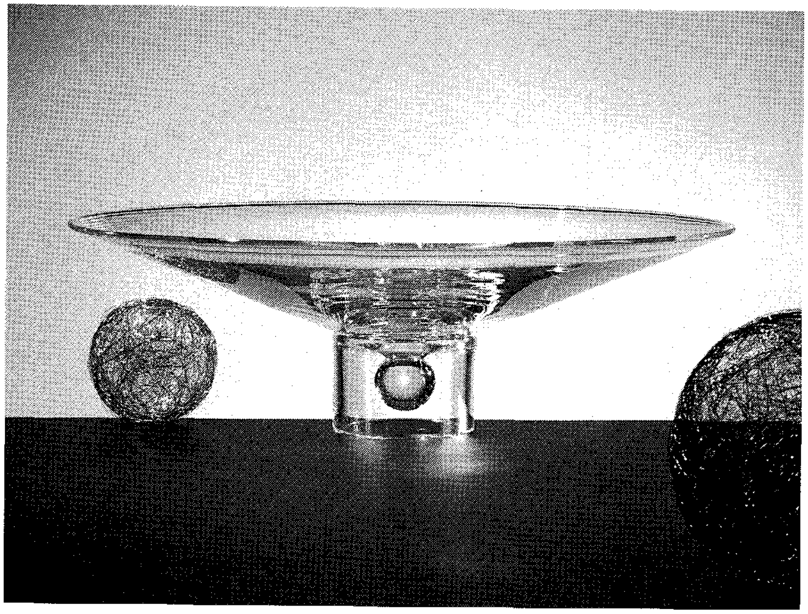

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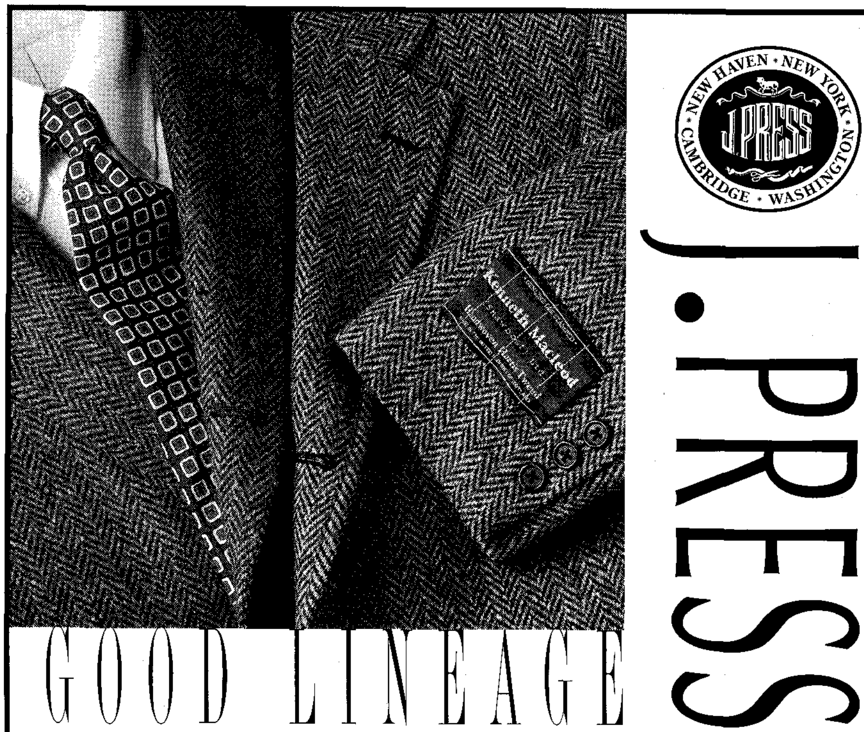

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century later. . . . ¶ Sept. 17: Chinese ceramics, furniture, and decorative art. . . . ¶ Sept. 18: Japanese art, including screens, woodblock prints, and sculptures; also a sale of Japanese decorative pieces from the collection of the late Charles A. Greenfield. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

PHILLIPS—American and European furniture and decorations. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. Sept. 17.)

SWANN—An auction of books about art and architecture, in addition to prints, drawings, and *livres d'artiste.* (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Sept. 17.)

NEW YORK ARMORY ANTIQUES SHOW—More than a hundred international dealers, representing a wide variety of specialties, gather to launch the new season of antiques shows. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Sept. 16-19. For information, call 472-1180.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

"SIGHT UNSEEN"—Astronomical and space images made since 1860. Through Oct. 31. (Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363.)

"WOMEN TRAVELLERS"—Works by nine adventurers, including Leah Demchick, Marina Karella, Marcia Lippman, and Mai Duong. Through Sept. 26. (Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN—"Seeing Is Believing," a survey of the work of Vik Muniz. Through Nov. 8. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

SHORT LIST—**ANSEL ADAMS,** Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays. Through Oct. 24. . . . **SHELBY LEE ADAMS,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through Oct. 10. . . . **SALLY APFELBAUM** and **NICHOLAS BARKER,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Both shows through Oct. 17. . . . **EUGÈNE ATGET,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Oct. 10. . . . **JEFF BROUWS,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Oct. 17. . . . **CHRIS BUCK,** SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays. Through Oct. 5. . . . **LINDA BUTLER,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through Oct. 10. . . . **ELLEN CAREY** and **AMANDA MEANS,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Both shows through Oct. 10. . . . **HARRY CALLAHAN** and **ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through Oct. 24. . . . **LARRY CLARK,** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through Oct. 24. . . . **MILES COOLIDGE,** Kaplan, 48 Greene St. 226-6131. Through Oct. 10. . . . **REGINA DE LUISE,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Oct. 10. . . . **THOMAS DEMAND,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through Oct. 14. . . . **NORITOSHI HIRAKAWA,** Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through Oct. 17. . . . **JAN LUKAS,** De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482. Through Nov. 7. . . . **KLAUS LUTZ,** De Chiara/Stewart, 521 W. 26th St. 967-6007. Through Oct. 10. . . . **SUSAN MEISELAS,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon. Through Oct. 24. . . . **RAY K. METZKER** and **ALBERT RENGER-PATZSCH,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Both shows through Oct. 31. . . . **CARLO MOLLINO,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through Oct. 10. . . . **EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE,** Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays. Through Nov. 1. . . . **GORDON PARKS,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. . . . **TOMIO SEIKE,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Oct. 31. . . . **SPENCER TUNICK,** I-20, at 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100. Through Oct. 24. . . . **JAMES WELLING,** Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through Oct. 31. . . . **BRETT WESTON,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art.)

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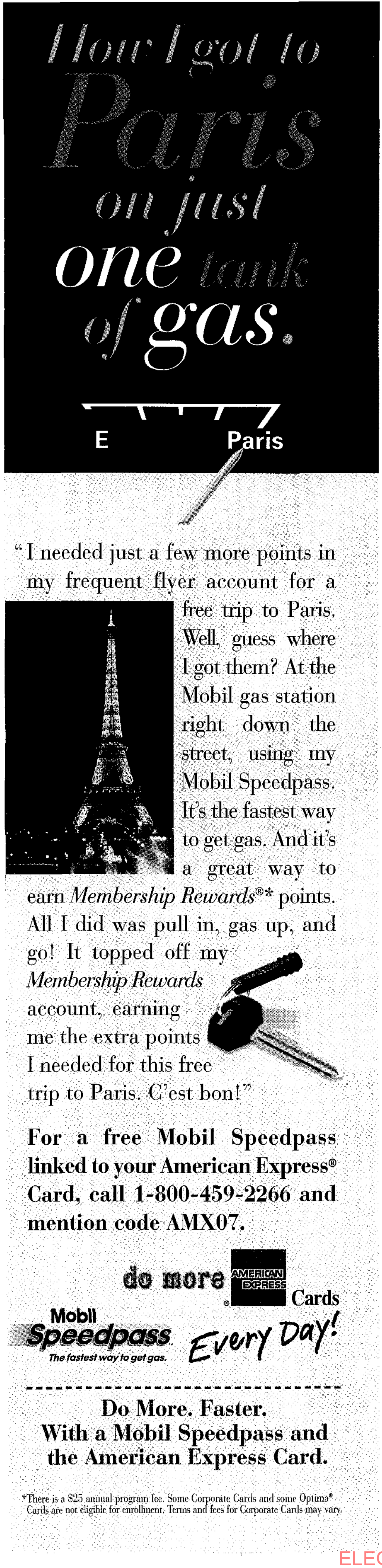
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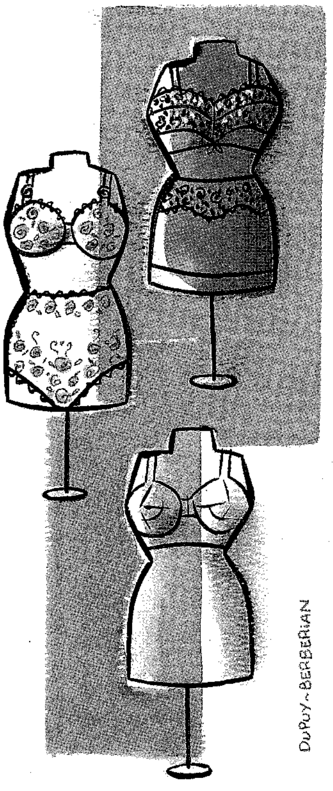
ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Out of Sight

It's been years since lingerie was merely a prudishly hidden element of a woman's wardrobe, yet its private functions are still vital. Feminine underthings were created, after all, to provide not only support and protection but also visual provocation during the final stages of undressing. No matter how many lace camisoles, silk slips, show-through bras, and thong outlines parade on the street these days, there is still something thrilling about shopping for tiny, secret clothes that hold in, hold up, and hold out promise.



The compact, seventy-year-old **Orchard Corset Discount Center** (157 Orchard St.; 674-0786) is the British Library of foundation garments—its horizontal stacks contain every rubber girdle, zip-front "brasalette," boned waist cincher, calf-length corset, and big girl's bra known to woman, many at half price. "The hard to fit is our specialty!" a sign on the wall exuberantly proclaims, and, indeed, Orchard is where every bosom from 30A to 54I can be enhanced, minimized, reshaped, upthrust, or tethered.

Magda Bergstein, the shop's Hungarian-born curator of corsets—a maternal woman who can accurately measure bra size with a glance—says, "Some people, they wear the wrong size for a lifetime. They can be *helped.*" Rescue may come in the form of a retro bullet bra ($10) in snow-white cotton, stitched architecturally to form breast pyramids ("This bra says, 'Here I am!'" Mrs. Bergstein points out), or it may be something by Do All, Subtract, Smoothie, Big Gals, or Goddess, the last of which does a boned bustier in nylon lace ($30) that will enable even a 48FF to go merrily strapless.

Occupying an equally secure niche at the other end of the lingerie market is **La Petite Coquette** (51 University Pl.; 473-2478), Rebecca Apsan's twenty-year-old boutique, whose stock is less about the right tools for the job than about sheer seduction. Customers have been known to spend all day in this boudoir, lulled by the lounge-meets-bump-and-grind rotation on the CD system and the pervasive scent of butterscotch (from the "bra-pourri" fragrance sachets; $15) and hypnotized by the racks and drawers and baskets of exquisite little nothings, each bra with its panty-and-garter partner, and many playing the field with boy-cut, French-cut, thong, bikini, and tap-pant versions.

The cult of La Perla is better served at Coquette than at the brand's own store, uptown on Madison Avenue, but cultists may well be tempted by such other dolce-vita Italian labels as Naory and Vannina Vesperini, or by something from the Leigh Bantivoglio line—for example, a silk bandeau the color and texture of Helen of Troy's inner thigh ($235). From Paris, there are funky-cute, heart-bedecked cotton-lace bras by Aubade ($79-$100); a gently perverse, boned and embroidered black corselet, which laces in the back and has no cups, by Cadolle ($485); and delicious gossamer articles by Ravage, like Caprice, an underwire bra that's apparently stitched from pink or burgundy rose petals ($134). From across the English Channel, there is refined underwear by the British doyenne of skimpy silks, Janet Reger, and sultry pieces by the keeper of the royal *poitrine*, Rigby & Peller. All can be customized to fit.

La Petite Coquette also carries hand-painted scarves, p.j.s, negligees, year-round swimwear, and—pinned to padded screens like butterflies—everyday lines like Hanro panties and the best thong in town: the all-cotton Hanky Panky ($12). Another rack holds Apsan's private-label line of lace-edged silk slips in such colors as fuchsia, tangerine, peacock, cobalt, and ice, in short, long, and dress styles ($90, $120, $146). Perhaps there should be a moratorium on wearing these eye-catchers as outer garments. Lingerie concealed is lingerie intensified.

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

New York City Opera—Sept. 16 and Sept. 22 at 7:30 and Sept. 19 at 1:30: Handel's "Partenope." . . . ¶ Sept. 18 at 8: "Tosca." . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 8 and Sept. 20 at 1:30: A double bill of Weill's "The Seven Deadly Sins" and Orff's "Carmina Burana." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

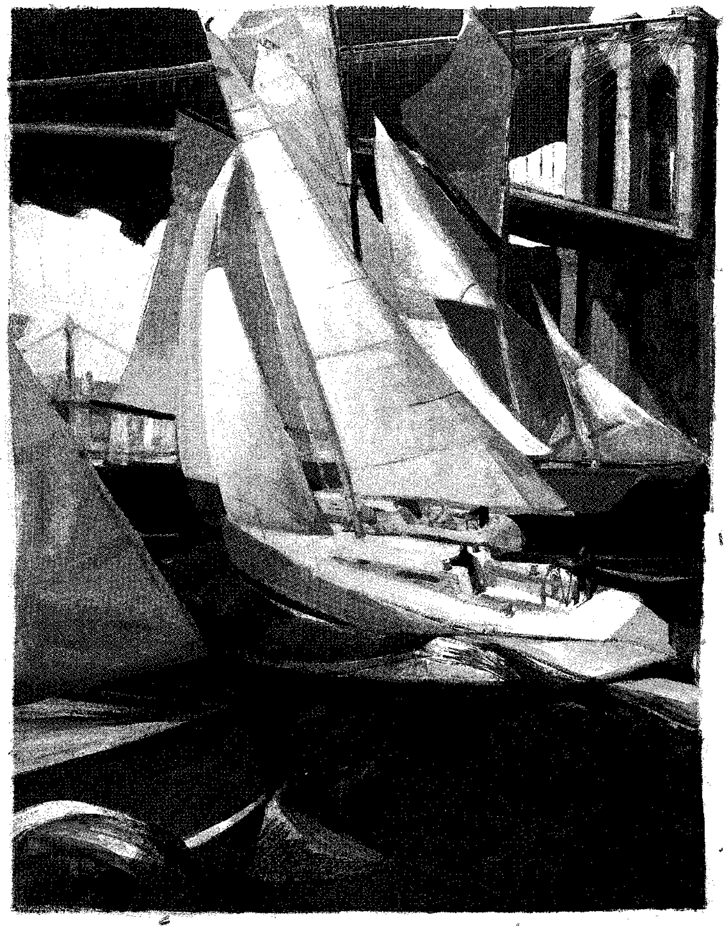
"Der Kaiser von Atlantis"—Final performances of the hour-long opera, composed in 1943 by Victor Ullmann, for performance by his fellow-prisoners in the Terezin concentration camp. Petr Kotick leads the S.E.M. Ensemble and a cast of American singers. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Sept. 17-19 at 8.)

LISTENING BOOTH

Fretted Friends—Several new guitar CDs hold abundant rewards even for music lovers who don't often think about the world of plucked strings. In the imaginatively conceived **NEWDANCE** (Bridge Records 9084), which hits the stores this week, David Starobin offers meticulously inflected renditions of short dance movements commissioned from eighteen composers of widely varying compositional persuasions, from spiky Elliott Carter to pensive Poul Rouders. Nothing here is more than two years old, though such pieces as William Bland's nostalgic "Rag Nouveau" and John Anthony Lennon's tango-inspired "Gigolo" are clearly descended from a distant, charmed era.

The Scottish-born, Malawi-raised guitarist Paul Galbraith (now living in Brazil) strikes an eccentric pose in the guitar world—he positions his eight-stringed, bent-neck instrument as if it were a cello—but his interpretations, no matter how idiosyncratic, are always interesting. In his transcriptions of **BACH'S COMPLETE SONATAS AND PARTITAS FOR SOLO VIOLIN** (Delos DE 3232; two CDs), his enlarged guitar echoes the wide range of the Baroque lute (for which Bach himself transcribed some of this music) while affording a plush tone. Whether or not you buy his theory that Bach conceived the six works as a biography of Jesus, you'll find that his playing has a firm spiritual core. And don't worry; you'll soon grow accustomed to his unorthodox tuning and closely miked breathing.

For something lighter, turn to **L.A.G.Q.** (Sony Classical SK 60274), the latest production of the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. After eighteen years together, its members play with the uncanny instinct that marks any fine chamber ensemble, and they delight in orchestrating unanticipated sonorities. This entertaining hour-long collection, which includes input from several wind-playing colleagues, unfurls along geographic lines—an African suite (with amazing mbira and gong effects), a set of toe-tapping klezmer dances, and so on—and, as grand tours go, it's simply grand.



The Mayor's Cup and the Knickerbocker Cup races start this week (see Above and Beyond).

RICCARDO VECCHIO

ORCHESTRAS

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducts the opening concerts of the orchestra's one-hundred-and-fifty-sixth season. Sept. 16 at 7:30: An all-Beethoven program, comprising the "Fidelio" Overture, Symphony No. 1, and Violin Concerto (featuring Isaac Stern.) . . . ¶ Sept. 17 at 8 and Sept. 18 at 11 A.M.: The first three weeks of the orchestra's subscription series are given over to a chronological survey of Beethoven's nine symphonies. Notwithstanding these works' centrality to the repertoire, they're rarely offered as a cycle; the last conductor to lead them in quick succession at the Philharmonic was Arturo Toscanini, who conducted "The Nine" over the course of ten days in April and May, 1942. These opening installments feature the Symphony No. 1, coupled with all four of the overtures Beethoven wrote for the various states of his opera "Leonore," or, to use its eventual title, "Fidelio." . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 8 and Sept. 22 at 7:30: The Symphonies No. 2 and No. 3 (the "Eroica"). (875-5030. The Beethoven cycle continues through Oct. 3. . . . **NOTE:** On Sept. 17 at 6:30, in a pre-concert roundtable open to ticket holders, musicologists Jonathan Del Mar and Peter Gülke join Mr. Masur to discuss the editing of Beethoven's symphonies. The pre-concert slot on Sept. 19 at 7 is given over to a performance of Beethoven's D-Major Serenade for Flute, Violin, and Viola, Op. 25.)

RECITALS

"A. Beach Party"—At Merkin Concert Hall, a celebration of America's most notable turn-of-the-century woman composer. Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (1867-1944) made a mark as a piano prodigy but agreed to limit her onstage appearances when, at the age of eighteen, she became the trophy wife of the much older Dr. H. H. A. Beach, a socially prominent Boston surgeon. She turned her attention to the private business of composing, but after her husband died, in 1910, she resumed her concert career; she even undertook tours throughout Europe, where everyone seemed amazed that someone with a double handicap—not just a woman, but an *American* woman—could have written European-sounding music of such high quality. Sept. 16 at 8: Joanne Polk, who has recorded all of Beach's piano music for the Arabesque label, performs solo works from different periods of the composer's career and is joined by the Lark String Quartet in the F-Minor Piano Quintet (Op. 67). . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 8:30: Violinist Curtis Macomber assists Ms. Polk in a recital that includes Beach's "Tyrolean Valse-Fantasie," "Variations on Balkan Themes," and A-Minor Violin Sonata. (129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

Bargemusic—Violinist Mark Peskanov and soprano DeBorge Pinnington perform their composition "Circle," and Mr. Peskanov is joined by cellist Suren Bagratuni and pianist Paul Ostrovsky for piano trios by Beethoven (the "Archduke") and Shostakovich (in E Minor). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Sept. 17 at 7:30 and Sept. 20 at 2.)

Ernst Bacon Remembered—It's hard to say why Ernst Bacon, who was born in Chicago just a hundred years ago, became the "dark horse of the twentieth century," as the presenters of this concert insist, with some legitimacy. Apparently self-promotion didn't claim much time in Bacon's packed life: apart from his work in music (which he practiced as a concert-level pianist, conductor, theorist, composer, critic, teacher, and administrator), he was a writer (of published poetry, prose, and aphorisms), a painter, and a left-leaning political and environmental activist. Since his death, in 1990, his fourth wife, Ellen (who was forty-four years his junior), has waged a campaign on his behalf; as a result, some of his long-forgotten works, sturdily crafted in a way that combines Bartókian lyricism with the rugged nobility of mid-century Americana, have found champions among several respected performers. In this program, soprano Amy Burton, baritone William Sharp, and pianist John Musto offer a sampling of Bacon's two hundred and fifty art songs (to texts by Dickinson, Whitman, and Sandburg, among others); violinist Ronald Copes, cellist Joel Krosnick, and pianist Gilbert Kalish play his Piano Trio No. 2; and Messrs. Krosnick and Kalish perform "A Life," which Bacon began to write when

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MONTBLANC PRESENTS

THE ART of CULTURE

A GUIDE TO THE SEASON'S HIGH NOTES

Chopin

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Leonard Bernstein

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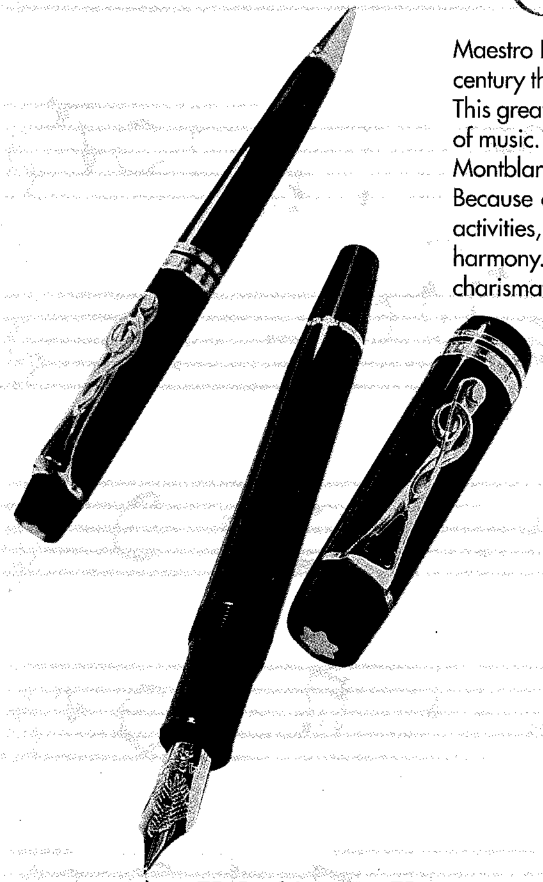
Leonard Bernstein



Maestro Leonard Bernstein redefined the boundaries of music, giving voice to the twentieth century through such dynamic works as "West Side Story," "Candide," and "On the Town." This great master dreamed of promoting peace in the world through the universal language of music. His efforts to promote world peace have been realized in the establishment of the Montblanc Philharmonia of the Nations, under the musical direction of Justus Frantz. Because of Bernstein's inspired vision and Montblanc's commitment to supporting cultural activities, musicians from more than forty countries and five continents are united in creative harmony. Now, with the elegant *Meisterstück Leonard Bernstein*, Montblanc celebrates this charismatic musician's singular vision.

NEW YORK CITY

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Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center
Chopin: "The Maiden's Wish," "Out of My Sight," "Lithuanian Song," "The Handsome Lad," and "Drinking Song"
Featuring Ewa Podleś, contralto and Jerzy Marchwinski, piano
Other featured composers: Karlowicz, Lutoslawski, Mussorgsky, and Rachmaninoff
For tickets and information, call 212.721.6500.

THE ANNUAL CHOPIN FESTIVAL
October 25th, November 29th
Consulate General of the Republic of Poland
Monthly Sunday afternoon concerts leading up to 150th anniversary of Chopin's death
Sponsored by The Chopin Foundation Council of Greater New York, featuring Abbey Simon, Augustine Anievas, Jan Gorbaty, and Maria Trenchi Bottazzi, pianists
For tickets and information, call 718.793.2625.

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
November 5th–7th and 10th
Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center
Bernstein: Suite from "On the Waterfront"
With Leonard Slatkin conducting
Other featured performances: MacDowell, Piano Concerto No. 2, featuring André Watts, piano; Lees, Concerto for String Quartet; featuring Glenn Dicterow and Marc Ginsberg, violins; Cynthia Phelps, viola; and Carter Brey, cello;
Schickele, Symphony No. 1 (*New York Première*)
For tickets and information, call 212.721.6500.

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
November 10th
Carnegie Hall
Bernstein: "Fancy Free"; Suite from "On the Waterfront"
With David Zinman conducting
For tickets and information, call 212.247.7800.

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
November 25th, 27th and 28th, December 1st
Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center
Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 3, K. 216
With André Previn conducting; featuring Pamela Frank, violin
Other featured performances: Druckman, "Aureole"; Dvořák, Symphony No. 7
For tickets and information, call 212.721.6500.

GREAT PIANISTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ON FILM
February 7th
Walter Reade Theater
Featuring Artur Rubinstein
Mostly Chopin Program:
Barcarolle in F-sharp, Op. 60;
Etudes: in A-flat Op. 25 No. 1;
G-flat, Op. 10 No. 5;
E-minor, Op. 25 No. 5;
C-sharp minor Op. 10 No. 4;
Polonaise in A-flat ("Héroique")
performed at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, 1964
For tickets and information, call 212.721.6500.

Bernstein photo: Siegfried Lauterwasser

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Chopin

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October 1st–3rd and 6th
Symphony Hall
Mozart: Symphony No. 36, "Linz"
With Seiji Ozawa conducting; featuring Yo-Yo Ma, cello; the Performing Artists at Lincoln Schoo; and the Imperial Bell Ensemble
Other featured performances: Dun, "Symphony 1997 (Heaven Earth Mankind)"
For tickets and information, call 617.266.1200.

THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
February 4th–6th
Symphony Hall
Mozart: Flute Concerto No. 1 in G
With Seiji Ozawa conducting; featuring Jacques Zoon, flute
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LOS ANGELES

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THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
November 27th–29th
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
Bernstein: Suite from "On the Waterfront"
With Kent Nagano conducting; featuring Wayne Marshall, piano
Other featured performances: Gershwin, Concerto in F; Ives, Symphony No. 4
For tickets and information, call 213.850.2000.

THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
March 4th–6th
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
Mozart: "Great" Mass in C minor
With Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting; featuring Barbara Bonney, Susanne Mentzer, Paul Groves, Nathan Berg, soloists; with The Los Angeles Master Chorale
For tickets and information, call 213.850.2000.

THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
February 9th
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
All-Chopin Celebrity Recital
(Program to be determined.)
Featuring Evgeny Kissin, piano
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Other featured performances: Boulez, Notations I–IV; Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16
With Sylvain Cambreling conducting; featuring Nikolai Lugansky, piano
For tickets and information, call 415.864.6000.

CHOPIN WITH KEVIN KENNER
October 28th
San Francisco Conservatory of Music
Chopin: Scherzos Nos. 1-4
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PHILHARMONIA BAROQUE ORCHESTRA
December 18th
Herbst Theatre
All-Mozart Program:
Symphony No. 34 in C, K. 388; "Exsultate, jubilate," K. 165; Mass in C minor, K. 427
With Nicholas McGegan conducting; featuring Dominique Labelle and Twyla Whittaker, sopranos; Thayer Coburn, tenor; Todd Donovan, baritone; and the Philharmonia Chorale
For tickets and information, call 415.495.7445.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY
January 14th–15th
Davies Symphony Hall
Bernstein: "A Quiet Place" Suite
Other featured performances: Ives, "Three Places in New England"; Prokofiev, Symphony No. 5
With Michael Tilson Thomas conducting
For tickets and information, call 415.864.6000.

* All programs are subject to change.

SEATTLE

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THE NORTHWEST CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
October 31st–November 1st
Benaroya Recital Hall
Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466
Other featured performances: Brahms, "Leibeslieder Waltzes," Op. 52; Handel, Concerto Grosso in B minor, Op. 6, No. 12; Wiren, "Serenade for Strings"
With Adam Stern conducting; featuring Jon Kimura Parker, piano
For tickets and information, call 206.343.0445.

MAINLY MOZART & THE NORTHWEST CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
November 21st–22nd
Benaroya Recital Hall
Mozart: Overture, "La Finta Giardiniera," K. 196; Concerto in C for Oboe and Orchestra, K. 314
Other featured performances: Haydn, Symphony No. 16 in B-flat; Symphony No. 44 in E minor, "Trauer"
With Adam Stern conducting; featuring Alex Klein, oboe
For tickets and information, call 206.343.0445.

SEATTLE OPERA
January 16th–30th
Seattle Center Opera House
Mozart: "Don Giovanni"
Featuring Jason Howard as Don Giovanni, Laura Polverelli as Zerlina
For tickets and information, call 206.389.7676.

THE NORTHWEST CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
January 23rd–24th
Benaroya Recital Hall
Mozart: "A Musical Joke," K. 522
With Adam Stern conducting
Other featured performances: Biber, "Battalia"; Creston, "A Rumor"; P.D.Q. Bach, "A Lot of Nightmare Music"
For tickets and information, call 206.343.0445.

MOZART IN THE PARK
January 31st
Seattle Asian Art Museum, Volunteer Park
Mozart: String Quartet in D, K. 575
"Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," K. 525
Featuring members of The Northwest Chamber Orchestra
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his son Paul was born, in 1941, and only completed twenty-six years later, when Paul died in a freak accident. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 17 at 8.)

My Lord Chamberlain's Consort—The eight-member early-music ensemble offers Thomas Morley's "The First Booke of Ayres, or Little Short Songs to Sing and Play to the Lute," a collection of solo works published in 1600. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Sept. 17 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Anonymous 4—The women's vocal quartet, a group of medievalists who enjoy unlikely but well-deserved success even beyond the early-music realm, performs anonymous thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English chants and polyphonic movements that appear on their latest Harmonia Mundi recording, "A Lammas Ladymass," which features devotional music for the harvest season. Though serious music lovers should look askance at the devolution of concerts into mere marketing opportunities for recordings, in this case the connection is actually enriching: the art on the CD's cover, a "Coronation of the Virgin" by Simon Marmion, is reproduced from an illumination owned by the Morgan Library, which will display it on the day of the performance. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347. Sept. 18 at 6:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

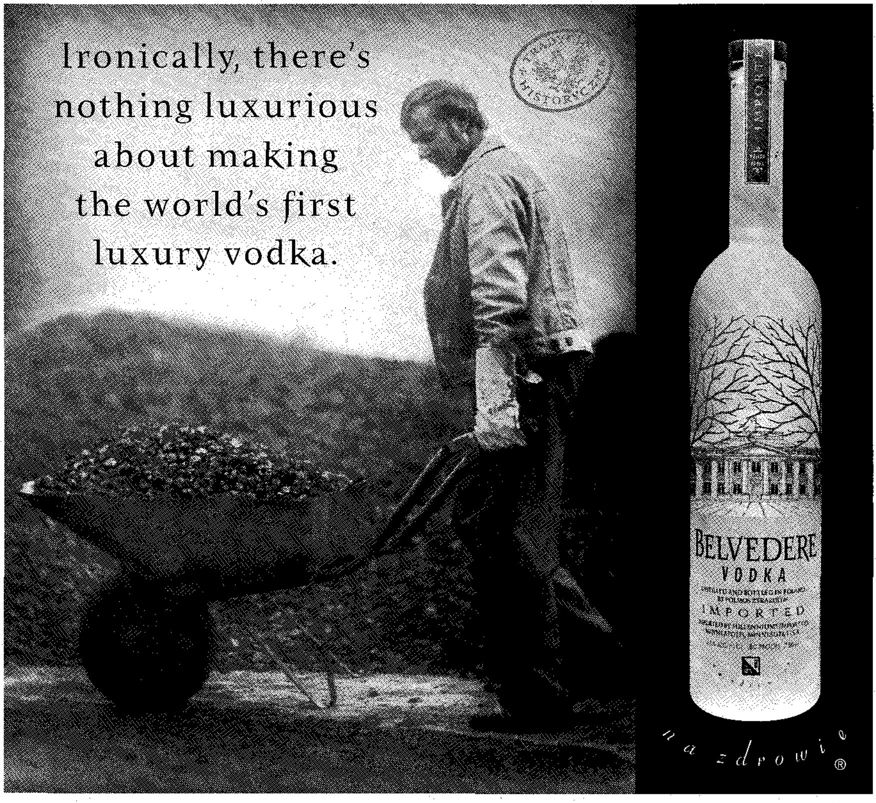
Blown Away—A series of regattas gets under way this week in New York Harbor. On Sept. 19, at noon, some forty vintage wooden schooners, yawls, and sloops, including the twelve-meter America's Cup yacht Intrepid (winner of the 1967 and 1970 races), take up the challenge for top honors in the South Street Seaport Museum's thirty-second annual Mayor's Cup Race. The cook aboard the last-place yacht receives a prize, too, usually a bottle of rum and a box of cornflakes. For more information, call 748-8590. . . . ¶ During the Knickerbocker Cup races, which start Sept. 23, a dozen identical thirty-three-foot-long sloops (skippered by the top sailors in the world, including future America's Cup competitors and the current reigning match-cup champion, Australian Peter Gilmour) compete for more than eighty thousand dollars in prize money. For more information, call 203-363-1084.

A to Z—The artist Dylan Stone was born in New York City, raised in England, and educated in Spain, so his interest in travel is self-evident. The nature of that interest is somewhat peculiar: on Sept. 16, from 10 until closing, he'll be in the musty confines of the Strand Bookstore, on Broadway at 12th St., single-handedly alphabetizing the travel-book section. "It doesn't really matter if I finish or not," says Stone, who'll be wrestling with more than five thousand volumes. "In a few months it will all be in disarray again."

Readings—Sept. 16 at 6: Dennis Nurkse, Pete Hamill, Philip Lopate, Charles Siebert, and other writers and poets line up in Brooklyn's Fort Greene Park for a tribute to one of the park's fiercest advocates, Walt Whitman. (No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 7: Helen Schulman reads from her novel "The Revisionist," and Dani Shapiro from her memoir, "Slow Motion." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Sept. 17 at 7: Animator Ralph Bakshi ("Fritz the Cat") talks about his work. (School of Visual Arts, 209 E. 23rd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 6: Curator Wayne Baerwaldt, critic Carlo McCormack, artist Francesco Conz, and others discuss the work of Al and Beck Hansen (see Art). (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. No tickets necessary.)

Walk—Sept. 16 at 10 A.M.: The General Services Administration offers a guided tour of Governors Island. For more information, call 264-2573, or visit the Web site www.gsa.gov/pbs/pr/govisland.htm.



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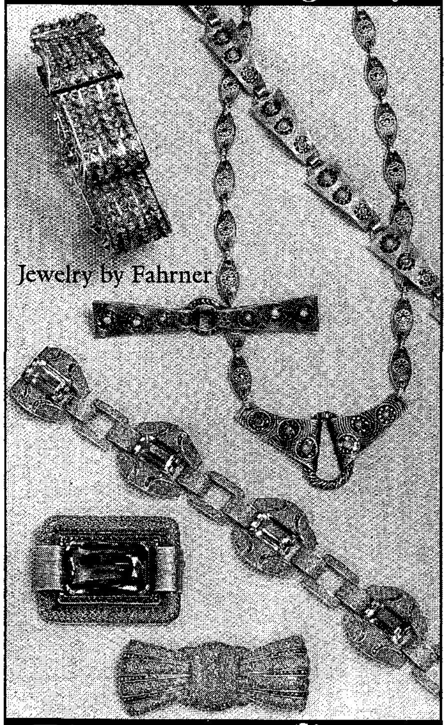

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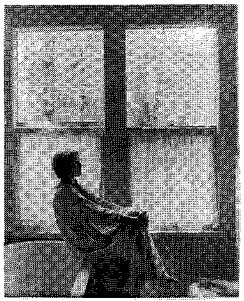

Clarence White, *Morning*, 1906.

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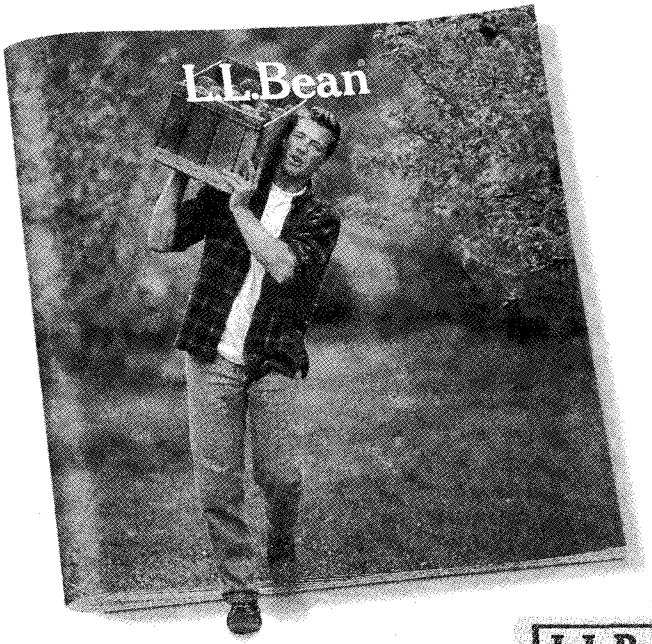

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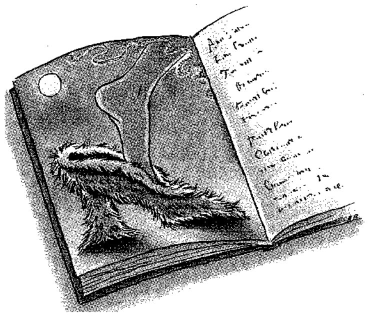
BOOK CURRENTS

Pied-à-Verre

For those who think that fashions in footwear are unworthy of serious consideration, consider this: in his 1697 classic telling of the fairy tale "Cinderella," Charles Perrault transformed the slipper, which was traditionally made of fur, into glass. (The change may have been intentional, or he may have confused *vair*, the term for an ermine pelt, with *verre*.) Picture Cinderella flying down the palace stairs with her feet enveloped in weasel fur, and matters of style no longer seem quite as trivial.



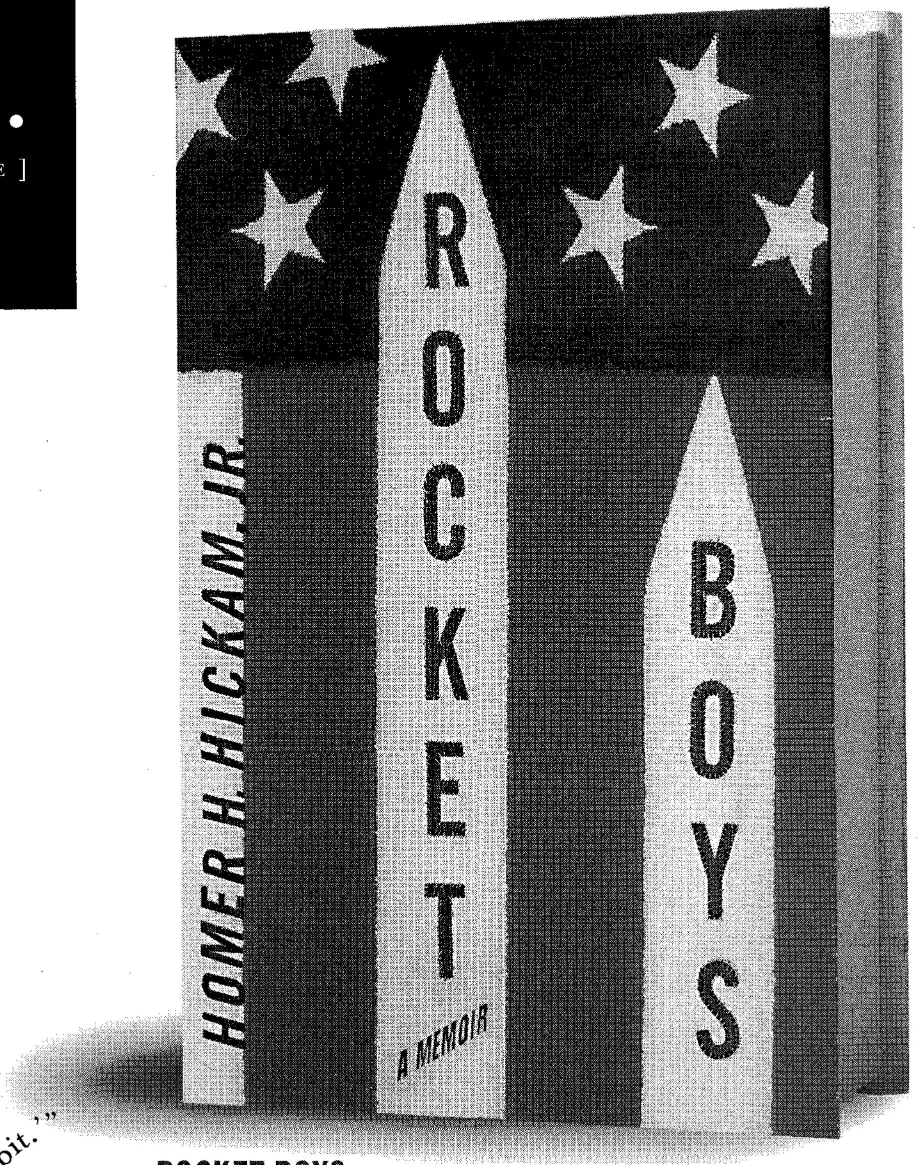
ROXANNA BIKADOROFF

The only fur-covered footwear to appear in the pictorial history **A Century of Shoes** (Chartwell Books), by Angela Pattison and Nigel Cawthorne, is a pair of nineteen-sixties faux-zebra-skin knee boots. As with the majority of shoes in the book—Birkenstocks, bowling shoes, Marlene Dietrich's crystal-encrusted satin slingbacks—the boots are photographed from the side to show off the heels and insoles. There are profiles of shoe-design pioneers (Manolo Blahnik, Dr. Klaus Maertens), and history is presented with comprehensive surefootedness: "When [stilettos] were invented in the mid-1950s," reads one passage, "they inflamed passion in both men and women and ruined a million woodblock floors."

Tom Vanderbilt's **The Sneaker Book** (New Press) focusses on the roadrunner-ish rise of the athletic shoe and how it changed professional sports. The author traces how flat, unfussy Jack Purcells evolved into alien-looking lace-ups with viscous fluids encased in their heels. **The Botanical Footwear of Dennis Kyte** (S Editions), a recent collection of watercolors, features one Victorian slipper rendered in all sorts of vegetal mediums: eggplants and nasturtiums, coreopsis and calla lilies. Kyte's leafy creations would probably not appeal to the narrator of Geoff Nicholson's novel **Footsucker** (Overlook), a shoe fetishist who's into organic footwear of another kind: "I tend to like my women's shoes to be made of something that was once alive; leather or suede . . . antelope or . . . zebra." As for Cinderella's glass slipper, he is dismissive: she is an ash girl, after all, and the shoes are transparent. Why celebrate dirty feet?

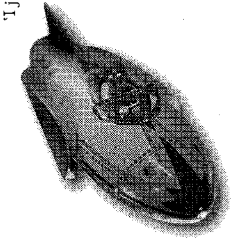
Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]



"Mom saw me and came outside. 'What are you doing to that dog?' 'I just wondered how big a rocket it would take to put her into orbit.'"

—Excerpt from *Rocket Boys*



ROCKET BOYS

by Homer H. Hickam, Jr.

In Coalwood, West Virginia, the company-owned houses were painted white every five years, only to fade again to gray in the blowing dust from the coal mine that was the town's lifeblood. NASA engineer and *Discover Great New Writers* author Homer H. Hickam, Jr., grew up in Coalwood, where a kid's career options were either to become a football star or work in the mine. But he and his friends found another way out—science. In the tradition of memoirs such as Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* and Russell Baker's *Growing Up, Rocket Boys* is the story of Hickam's youth. At the same time, this book is a smart and humorous journey into America's past, where the days were filled with adventure and the future was as wide open as space itself. (Delacorte Press)

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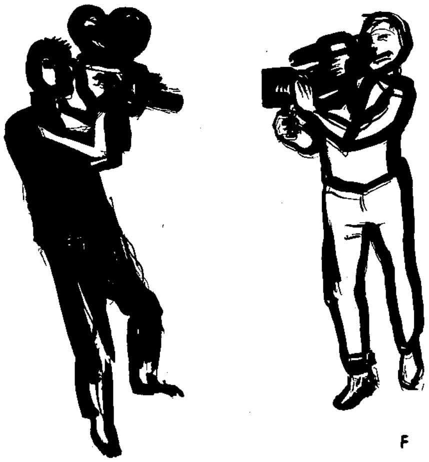


THE MOVIES

OPENING

Chicago Cab—A dark comedy about a cabdriver (Paul Dillon) and his fares on a long shift during the Christmas season. Directed by Mary Cybulski and John Tintori. Opening Sept. 18. (Quad Cinema.)

One True Thing—A drama, based on Anna Quindlen's novel, about a New York career woman (Renée Zellweger), her parents (Meryl Streep and William Hurt), and their newly forming adult relationship. Directed by Carl Franklin. Opening Sept. 18.

Permanent Midnight—Ben Stiller plays a Los Angeles television writer in this film based on the autobiography by Jerry Stahl. Also with Elizabeth Hurley, Janeane Garofalo, and Maria Bello; written and directed by David Veloz. Opening Sept. 16.

Rush Hour—An action thriller in which a Hong Kong police detective (Jackie Chan) investigating the kidnapping of a diplomat's daughter encounters interference from a Los Angeles detective (Chris Tucker). Directed by Brett Ratner. Opening Sept. 18.

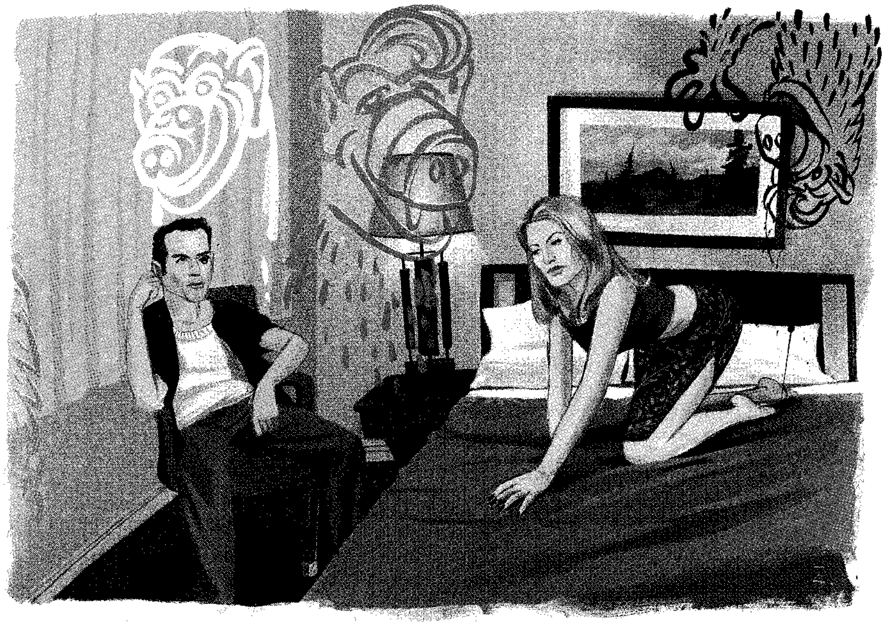
A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries—A Merchant-Ivory production of Kaylie Jones's autobiographical novel about growing up in Paris during the late sixties and seventies with two colorful parents, the novelist James Jones and his wife, Gloria. With Kris Kristofferson, Barbara Hershey, and Leelee Sobieski; directed by James Ivory. Opening Sept. 18. (Paris.)

Somewhere in the City—A black comedy about six residents (Sandra Bernhard, Bai Ling, Robert John Burke, Ornella Muti, Peter Stormare, and Paul Anthony Stewart) of a New York tenement, directed by Ramin Niami. Opening Sept. 18. (Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

The Battle of San Pietro (1943)—Generally regarded as perhaps the greatest wartime documentary ever made. It was shot by six Signal Corps cameramen, under Major John Huston's direction; he wrote and spoke the factual narration, which shades into austere irony. The film got into trouble with the Army and was cut from five reels to the thirty-three minutes that remain, but you wouldn't guess it. This doesn't seem like a cut film; it has its own perfection.—*Pauline Kael* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 19.)



Opening Sept. 16, Ben Stiller and Maria Bello in "Permanent Midnight."

ZOHAR LAZAR

Bride of the Andes (1966)—In Susumu Hani's ambitious artistic failure, a woman who has suffered a tortured widowhood in Japan marries, by mail, a bespectacled obsessive who hopes to restore the grandeur of the Incan empire. You expect the movie, for all its self-seriousness, to be nuttily entertaining, a cross between "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore" and "Aguirre, the Wrath of God." But all you get is Sino-Peruvian exotica. The crucial character is the husband, but this Japanese man living in an Indian village has as much depth as an ideogram; it's impossible to share his involvement with the descendants of the Incas. Searching for relics in order to sell them for the good of the village (which suffers under traditional Spanish persecution), he's an archeological Albert Schweitzer. His marriage to the lovely Sachiko Hidari is seemingly sexless for much of the movie. Hani's sweeping vistas should sell a lot of plane tickets to Lima (Pan Am was one of the film's producers); too bad Hani couldn't create men and women to match his mountains. In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 19.)

Chile, Obstinate Memory (1997)—Pure in focus and vigorous in attack, this fifty-eight-minute documentary achieves poetic intensity with a spare, unmannered style. Returning to his homeland with his long-banned epic, "The Battle of Chile" (1976), under his arm, the filmmaker Patricio Guzmán sets out to explore the importance—and the fragility—of memory in politics in this provocative hour-long documentary. He unearths painful recollections of Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular government and the bloody coup that toppled it, and ends up asking: What happens to a dream deferred? This film combines heartbreaking reminiscences and provocative confrontations with eerie visits to the scenes of political crimes, like the stadium in Santiago that became a post-coup torture center and prison camp. In the most extraordinary sequence, Guzmán films men and women in the street reacting to the playing of the Unidad Popular anthem: we seem to witness nothing less than the rebirth of collective memory. In Spanish. Playing with Patricio Guzmán's "The Battle of Chile Part 2: The Coup d'État" (1976; in English and Spanish).—*M.S.* (Film Forum.)

Ever After—A sumptuous retelling of the Cinderella tale, with Drew Barrymore as the feisty stepdaughter and Anjelica Huston as the conniving stepmother who wants to marry her own daughter off to the handsome prince (Dougray Scott). Barrymore is sweet and amusing, but Huston gives the memorable performance—she swoops down on every actor's line like a hawk, leaving only gristle.—*Bruce Diones* (Beekman, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, and Waverly.)

54—Mike Myers plays Steve Rubell as the druggy epicenter of Studio 54, and his performance gives director Mark Christopher's soapy morality tale its only moments of wanton, hedonistic spirit. Christopher, who also wrote the script, concocts a story that's basically a watered-down "Saturday Night Fever" setup; in this film an aimless, blue-collar Jersey kid (Ryan Phillippe) with dreams of the big city gets a job at Studio 54, takes drugs, meets famous people, falls in love, and learns to stand on his own. The movie treats the party crowd he meets along the way as a bunch of vain, pathetic characters—rich snobs who pick on the weak and use sex as currency (pleasure corrupts everything). There's a lot to be said about where the road to excess leads, but it's not being said here.—*B.D.* (Astor Plaza, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

How Stella Got Her Groove Back—Terry McMillan's story about a beautiful buppie named Stella (Angela Bassett), who falls in love, in Jamaica, with a man half her age (Taye Diggs). This is Harlequin Romance land, and the film squeaks by as long as it's content to watch its lovers throwing off sparks. But the second half, in which Bassett struggles to fit love into her workaholic life, goes on forever.—*Sarah Kerr* (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

My Dinner with André (1981)—It's like a mad tea party or a mad, modern Platonic dialogue about the meaning of life. Self-effacingly directed, by Louis Malle, the film flows smoothly, creating the illusion that we are simply listening in on the dinnertime conversation of the playwright Wallace Shawn and the former avant-garde theatre director André Gregory. The premise of the movie is that they haven't seen each other since 1975, when André dropped out—took off on a spiritual quest for "reality," which led him around the world. Wally persuades André to tell him what he has been up to, and the suave, hawklike André, who's like the sum of all the crackpot glittery-eyed charmers in the world, pours out the record of his transcendental experiences. He keeps going, in wave after impassioned wave, describing astonishing, preposterous adventures in the Polish forests, in Scotland, in India and Tibet and in the Sahara, and even in Montauk, where he was buried alive in a death-and-rebirth ceremony. Wally, the pragmatist and sensualist, throws in an occasional skeptical dart, and then, when he begins to talk, he plays warthog to André's soaring flights of mysticism and offers the grubbiest of small comforts as proof of the fullness of his life. The two are perfect foils. This is a bizarre and surprisingly entertain-

Advertisement

HIS LEATHER

By Ernesto Mestre

BOTH a curse and a blessing: that she cannot forget, that she must breathe, that she must remain here, breathing still, so long after, living still, longing for his touch, staring out into the green sea, knowing, every minute that passes like a scratch on the soft-skinned purse that holds her memory, tender, for it will blend in, as all events blend in and form character, uniqueness, hoping still, every minute that has not yet passed, a perilous bliss, a galling joy, like the heavy heel of his hand pressed against the small of her bare back, like the steerhide straps of his doubt and his faith with which he gently bound her.

She waits for him who will not return. She wears his old gloves of play and work. She has no hands but the smooth leather ones that were once his: one, a sailmaker's palm, an odd little instrument that (like some secret pockets of her own body) is graven forever with his scent, softened and darkened with his labor.

"I'm going to work on the boat," he called. "Soon, soon, I'll be able to sail again, *mi vida*,"—the boat, a sloop mauled by that summer's first hurricane, its hull beaten and punched as if the sea had fists, its foresail ripped and chewed as if the wind had teeth. So he puts on his sailmaker's palm as if he were an artisan, an aide to Ulysses, pushes his thumb through the thumbhole and straps it on, and sits shirtless on the beach—the rising tide washing his bare feet, wetting his rolled up linen trousers—and knits his sail morning after morning, and as the leather palm is moistened with his effort and pierced by firm needles, it steals a little bit of his being for better keeping, and gives back a little of its own, so that when he returns to her in the siesta hour, and puts his sailmaker's hand to her cheek, his head on her bosom, she smells the palm (discarded now, hanging listless on a low branch of the fig tree) and she senses him and is not sure which is which, the man or the instrument. She does not care, for she can love either one as well.

And many nights when he is asleep, exhausted with his dreams of sailing the silver green swells, she goes to that low branch of the fig tree, approaches it roundabout, craftily (just as she had approached him first when she saw him tanning on that same beach where she now looks for him) and takes his leather palm from where it hangs and squeezes it till it gives, effluvious as a crushed fruit, and rubs it on her belly, and she has him twice and knows she will have him when he is gone, for this other hand she will keep. And she will wait for him who will not return, she will have no hands of her own but only those that were once his, one for his doomed task, the other for his dangerous pastime.

This one, his soft leather driving glove, expertly molded to him, as if in this hand were all his more delicate and subtle temperaments,

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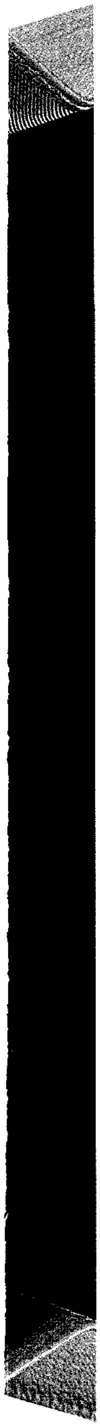

this mold of her vanquished love that she reaches into, as artless, as silent, as nimbly as he had once reached into those unknown regions within her. And her fingers do not quite reach, though she stretches them to the end, the way she stretches her sight to where the sea meets the clouds, neither quite reaching.

She puts the glove to her cheeks, her bosom. He had once told her that the steering wheel of a racing car was as sensitive as a lover's heart. One wrong shift of the slightest degree could be the difference between cruising past a sharp steep curve or smashing into the wall. The soft glove that now grazed her face, her breast, helped him sense the difference, that more sensitive skin that both lovers and race car drivers need. It was speed he liked, not to take him from her, but to bring him back as quickly as possible.

Once, from one of his journeys, he brought her a black leather bag filled with seashells from strange and foreign beaches. She sat under the fig tree and pulled out the seashells one by one, and put them to the sun, so that the light slipped off their frilly edges like water off a mermaid's back. And she arranged them in a circle around the bag—whose bluish glow was like a thick mantle hiding some great light—as if they were planets; but they looked so fragile, these soft bright colors so delicate, as if they might come off with the rub of a finger. She gathered them and returned the seashells to the bag, imagining that world within, soothing and forgiving and whole as the first darkness of a summer evening. She keeps his gloves in that bag with the seashells and when she opens it she smells the tender fragrance of his dreams and remembers that shared breath of their last kiss, that breath at once hers and not hers at all. *© Ernesto Mestre, 1998*

Ernesto Mestre was born in Guantanamo, Cuba in 1964. His family emigrated to Madrid in 1972, and then later that year to Miami. He graduated from Tulane University with a B.A. in English Literature. His novel, "The Lazarus Rumba," *will be published in the spring of 1999 by Picador.*

Please join us when Mestre reads from and signs copies of his favorite works on September 16, 1998 from 6 P.M. to 8 P.M. This is just one of a series of events of Beauty & Passion to be held at Café Bvlgari at 730 Fifth Avenue (57th Street), New York City. For a limited number of reservations, please call 800.BVLGARI, ext. 3.

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Left: Bag with one handle in amber leather, with five gussets and gold coated turn-lock. $1,100.
This page: Bag with two handles in amber leather, $1,300; one handle, $1,100.

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ing satirical comedy—the story of the search beyond theatre turned into theatre, or, at least, into a movie.—*P.K.* (Anthology Film Archives; Sept. 16 and Sept. 21.)

Nashville (1975)—The funniest epic vision of America ever to reach the screen. Robert Altman's movie is at once a "Grand Hotel"-style narrative, with twenty-four linked characters; a country-and-Western musical; a documentary essay on Nashville and American life; a meditation on the love affair between performers and audiences; and an Altman party. In the opening sequences, when Altman's people start arriving, and pile up in a traffic jam on the way from the airport to the city, the movie suggests the circus procession at the non-ending of "8½." But Altman's clowns are far more autonomous; they move and intermingle freely, and the whole movie is their procession. With Ronee Blakely as a true folk artist and the one tragic character, and David Arkin, Barbara Baxley, Ned Beatty, Karen Black, Timothy Brown, Keith Carradine, Geraldine Chaplin, Robert Doqui, Shelley Duvall, Allen Garfield, Henry Gibson, Scott Glenn, Jeff Goldblum, Barbara Harris, David Hayward, Michael Murphy, Allan Nicholls, Dave Peel, Cristina Raines, Bert Remsen, Lily Tomlin, Gwen Welles, and Keenan Wynn. Also with Richard Baskin (who arranged and supervised the music) and Elliot Gould and Julie Christie, who do bits as themselves.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Sept. 17.)

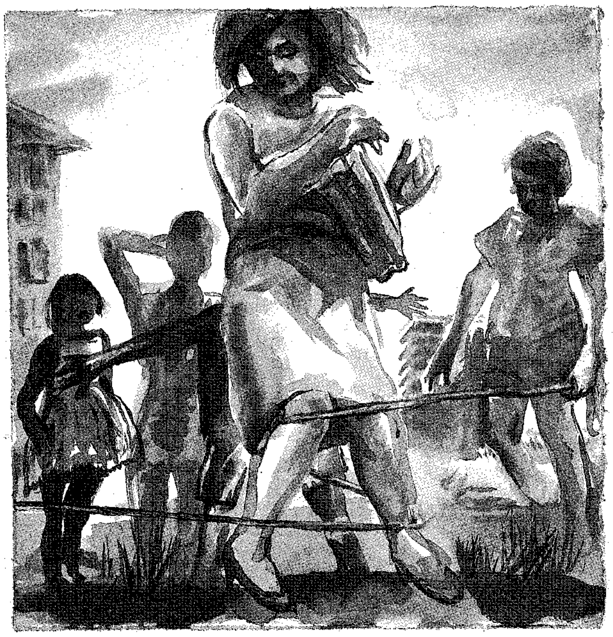
The Negotiator—The summer's first action film that's as rich in character as it is in suspense. The hypertense plot—a hostage negotiator (Samuel L. Jackson) takes some hostages of his own while another police strategist (Kevin Spacey) tries to persuade him to give up—allows ample room for two well-modulated performances. The movie is packed with a terrific supporting cast—particularly the late J. T. Walsh.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

Next Stop Wonderland—A smart-talking comedy, set in Boston, about two independent souls who are out of synch in their respective occupations: she's a nurse who should be a doctor; he's a plumber who should be a marine biologist. They're obviously made for each other, but writer-director-editor Brad Anderson playfully refuses to allow them to meet cute. Unlike the heavy-handed "Good Will Hunting," this gifted-Boston-misfit romance floats, adroitly mixing thoughtfulness, farce, and surprise.—*Ken Marks* (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Square.)

Return to Paradise—Three young men meet up in Malaysia and have such a ball that it's only a matter of time before fate intervenes. Sheriff (Vince Vaughn) and Tony (David Conrad) fly back to New York, leaving behind the sweetly spaced-out Lewis (Joaquin Phoenix) and, more important, a stash of hash. Two years later, Sheriff learns that Lewis was arrested in possession of the drugs and sentenced to death; only if the other two return to Malaysia and share the sentence—three years each in a hellhole—will their friend be allowed to live. It's a sharp hook for any plot, but Joseph Ruben's movie, written by Bruce Robinson and Wesley Strick, spends so long skewering us on the ethical predicament—How much should we suffer for the sake of others?—that pretty soon all you want is for Sheriff and Tony to make up their damn minds.—*Anthony Lane* (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

Saving Private Ryan—Steven Spielberg's new picture, one of his best, is a sandwich. The meat of the tale concerns a bunch of U.S. Army Rangers who are sent into Normandy to rescue the sole survivor of four brothers. On either side of this bold endeavor you get half an hour of unyielding combat: first, the D Day landings on Omaha Beach and, later, a consummate last stand in which too few Americans try to hold a bridge against too many Germans and too many tanks. Spielberg has arranged his violence into a semblance of pure disorder. The illusion holds, complete with severed limbs and wellsprings of blood, and it feels honorable; Spielberg's preachy movies can be an awful grind, but, apart from a disposable coda, this new work is too swift (and often too inaudible) to weigh you down.—*A.L.* (8/3/98) (Chelsea West, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

Snake Eyes—Set in Atlantic City, on the night of a heavyweight boxing match, Brian De Palma's new thriller features an over-emoting Nicolas Cage as Rick Santoro, a corrupt local detective who is loud and chummy and wears hideous shirts. When the Secretary of Defense (Joel Fabiani), who's in town to catch the fight, is assassinated, Santoro's moment of glory arrives: he steps in to help his old buddy, Navy Commander Kevin Dunne (Gary Sinise), cover up the fact that he left the Secretary unguarded, and orders the police to search for a suspicious-looking brunette in a blond wig (Carla Gugino). Santoro soon finds himself lost in the mists of a rapidly shifting story in which nothing is as it seems. In spite of its noirish glow, De Palma's thriller is oddly unsuspenseful.—*Daphne Merkin* (8/17/98) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, and State.)



At MOMA, Susumu Hani's "She and He."

DON DOE

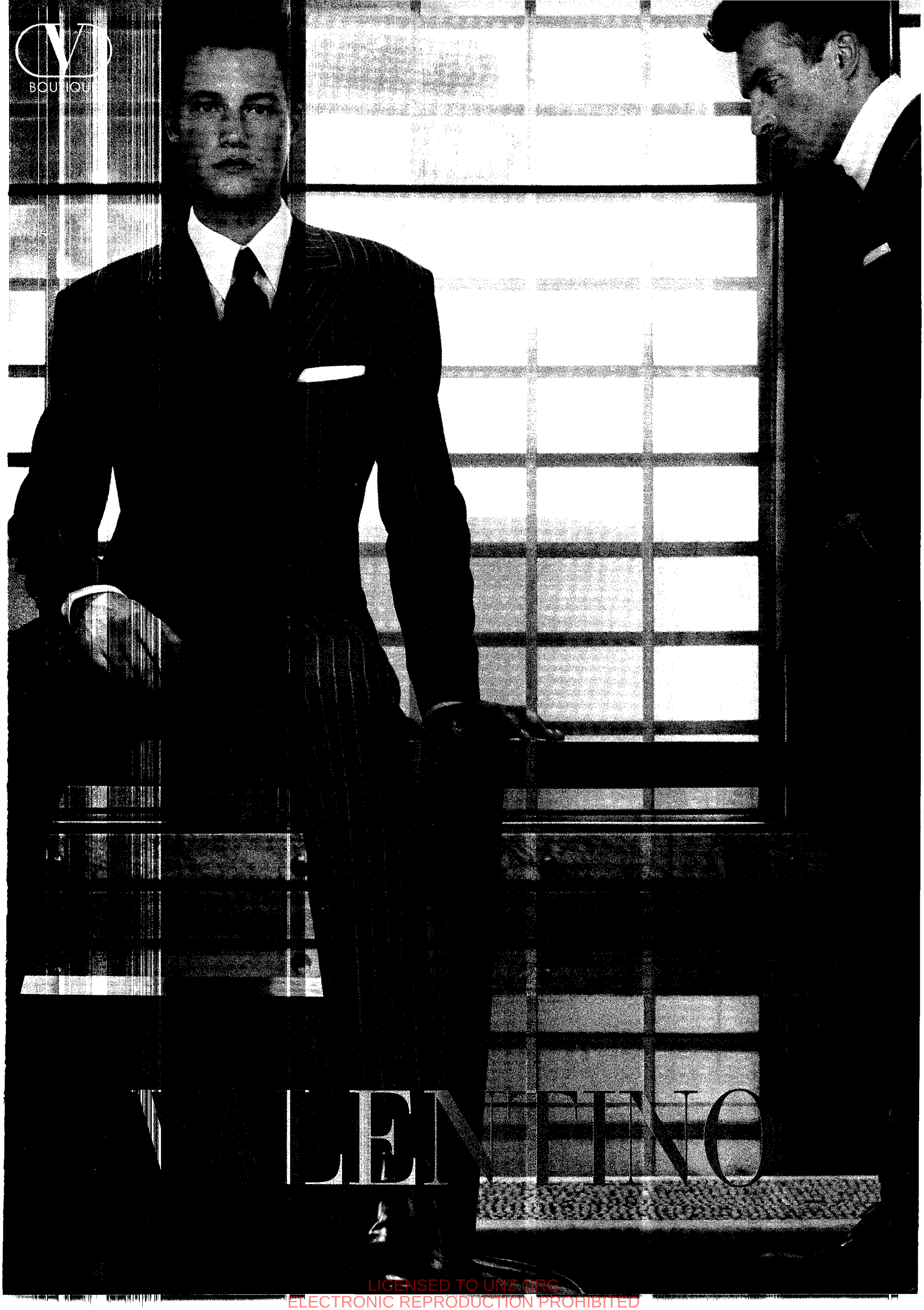
There's Something About Mary—The Farrelly Brothers, who have tipped the outrageousness scale before ("Dumb and Dumber," "Kingpin"), come up with some great new gross-out gags in this romantic comedy. The star, Cameron Diaz, in her Olivia Newton-John haircut, is the perfect naïve foil—she looks like she never knows what hit her. As the two loopy guys who are in love with her, Matt Dillon and Ben Stiller are garishly charming and full of desperate and irreverent ploys to get the girl. The film is packed with tasteless jokes (the best of them are crudely sexual), and it has a refreshing mean-spiritedness.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story (1993)—It's understandable that Steven Spielberg would want to sponsor a dinosaur cartoon for kids too young to see "Jurassic Park," but it's doubtful that this moralistic sketchpad will satisfy the tykes. In Hudson Talbott's original picture book, a little green alien with an I.Q.-enhancing formula educates and civilizes a group of dinosaurs, then drops them into twentieth-century New York City. The screenwriter, John Patrick Shanley, ruins the concept's antic, wispy charm by adding banal juvenile leads as well as a preachy rivalry between kindly Captain NewEyes, who promotes interspecies understanding, and cruel Professor ScrewEyes, who exploits fear and paranoia by turning the dinosaurs back into wild animals. The voice actors include John Goodman, Martin Short, Walter Cronkite, Kenneth Mars, and Julia Child.—*M.S.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Sept. 19-20.)

Your Friends & Neighbors—Another dirty comedy of bad manners from director Neil LaBute. The contemptuous heroes of his last picture, "In the Company of Men," were venal enough, but, compared to the inhabitants of the new movie, they seem about as noxious as the Hardy Boys. This time we are introduced to two couples: Mary (Amy Brenneman) lives with Barry (Aaron Eckhart), while Terri (Catherine Keener) lives with Jerry (Ben Stiller). Jerry starts an affair with Mary (what does she see in him?), Terri falls for a gallery assistant called Cheri (Nastassja Kinski), and Barry, the only sensible one, continues to have sex with himself. It's hard to care about the damage these people do to each other, since most of it will strike the audience as richly deserved. Jason Patric plays Cary, a good-looking monster who has the nerve to suggest that, in a glum world, he's actually having fun.—*A.L.* (8/24-31/98) (East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

ALSO PLAYING

ARMAGEDDON (reviewed in our issue of 7/13/98): Embassy 2 and Sutton.... **BLADE:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.... **BUFFALO '66:** Angelika Film Center.... **CUBE:** 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.... **DANCE WITH ME:** Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.... **DAVID SEARCHING:** Quad Cinema.... **DIGGING TO CHINA:** Angelika Film Center.... **DR. DOLITTLE:** Worldwide Cinemas.... **THE EEL:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.... **FIRELIGHT:** Angelika Film Center.... **THE GOVERNESS:** Art Greenwich Twin and Paris.... **HALLOWEEN: H20** (Reviewed in A Critic at Large, 8/10/98.): Chelsea Cinemas, State, and Village East Cinemas.... **KNOCK OFF:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, State, and Village East Cinemas.... **LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX:** Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Square, State, and Village Theatre VII.... **LIKE IT IS:** Quad Cinema.... **MARK TWAIN'S AMERICA:** Lincoln Square.... **THE MASK OF ZORRO:** 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, 64th and 2nd, and Waverly.... **A MERRY WAR:** First & 62nd Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.... **MODULATIONS:** Quad Cinema.... **NIGHTS OF CABIRIA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.... **THE OPPOSITE OF SEX:** Angelika Film Center and Regency.... **A PERFECT MURDER:** Worldwide Cinemas.... **π:** Angelika Film Center.... **ROUNDERS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village East Cinemas.... **SEE THE SEA:** Quad Cinema.... **SIMON BIRCH:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.... **SIX DAYS, SEVEN NIGHTS:** Worldwide Cinemas.... **SLUMS OF BEVERLY HILLS:** Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.... **SMOKE SIG-**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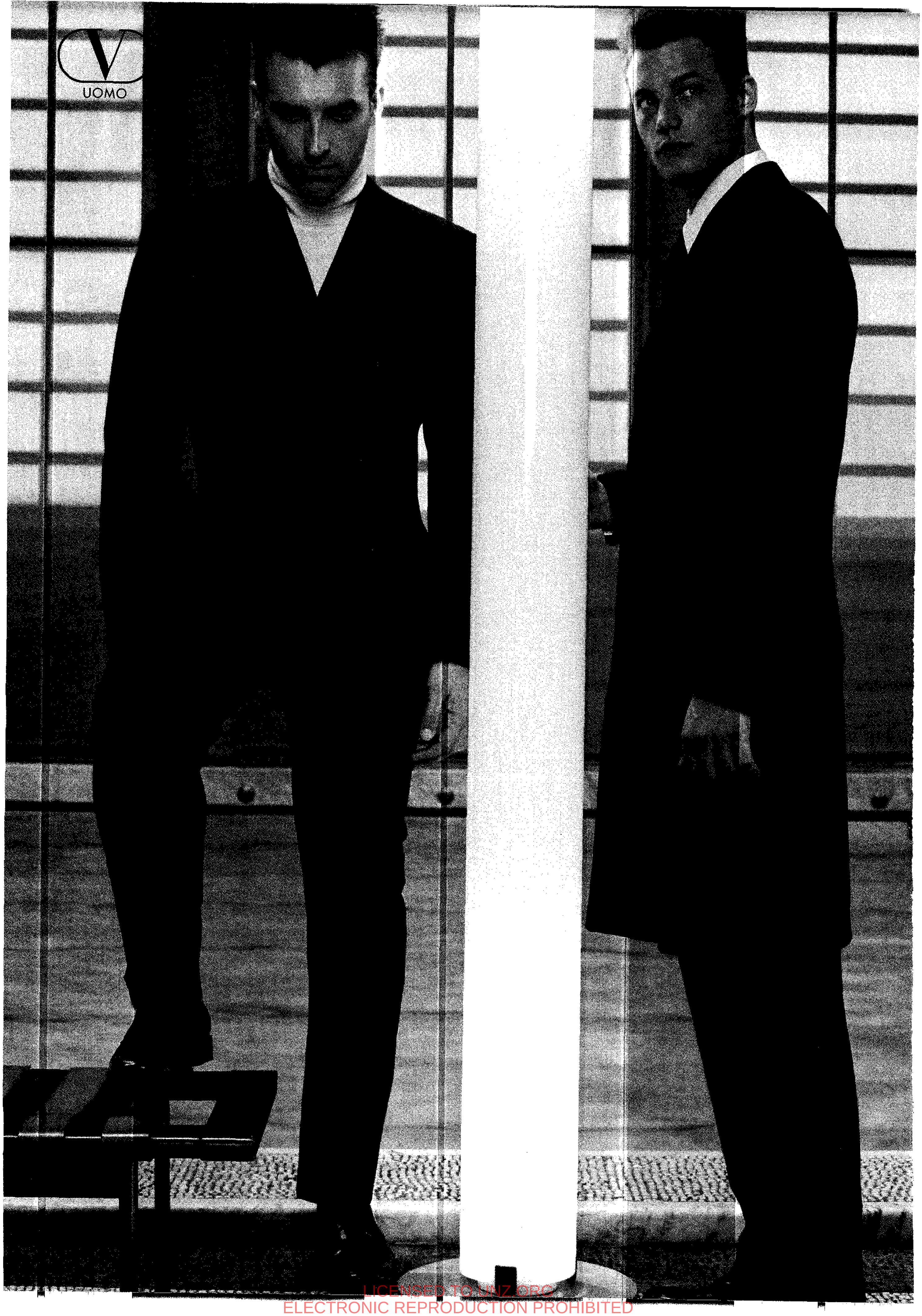
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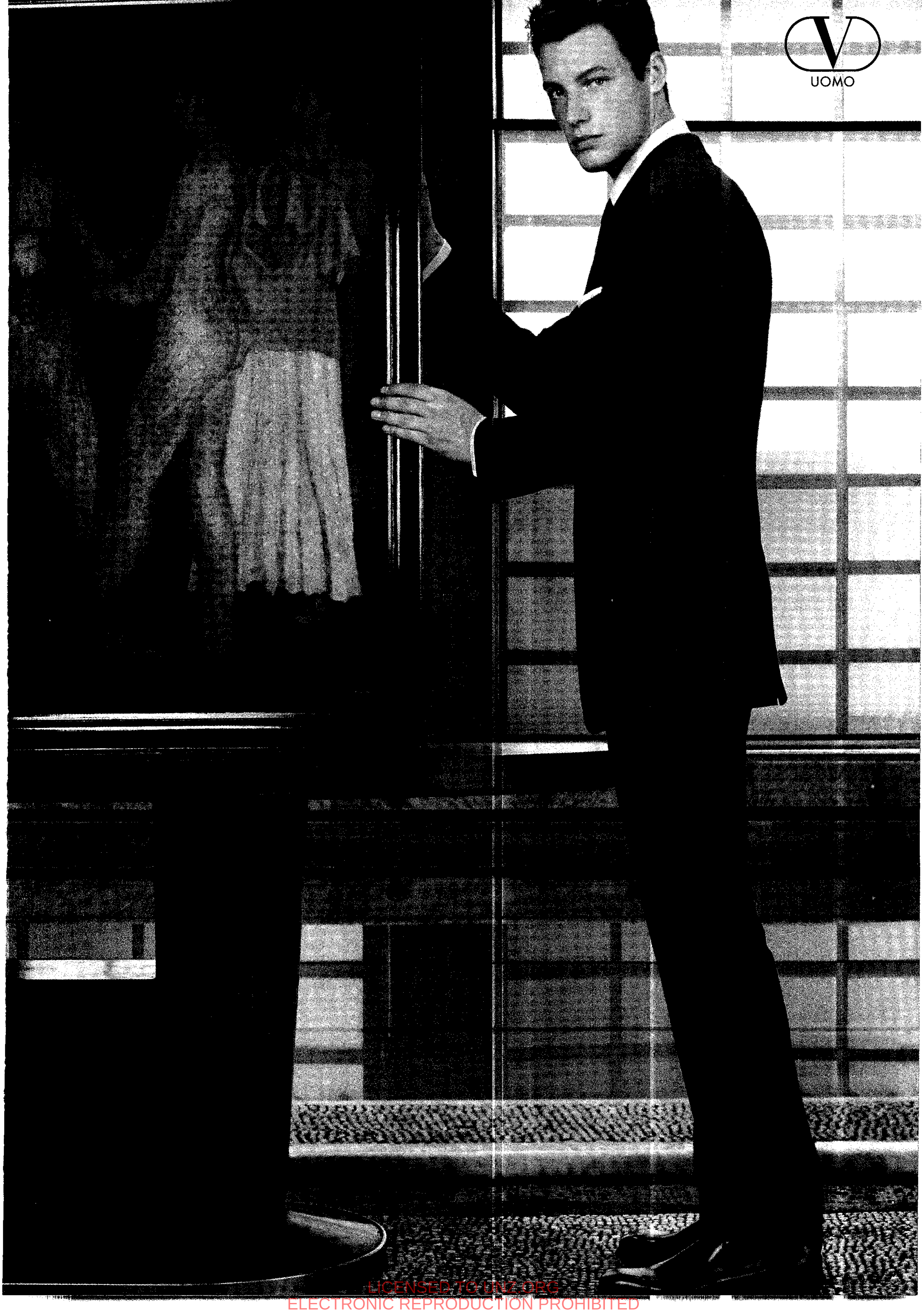
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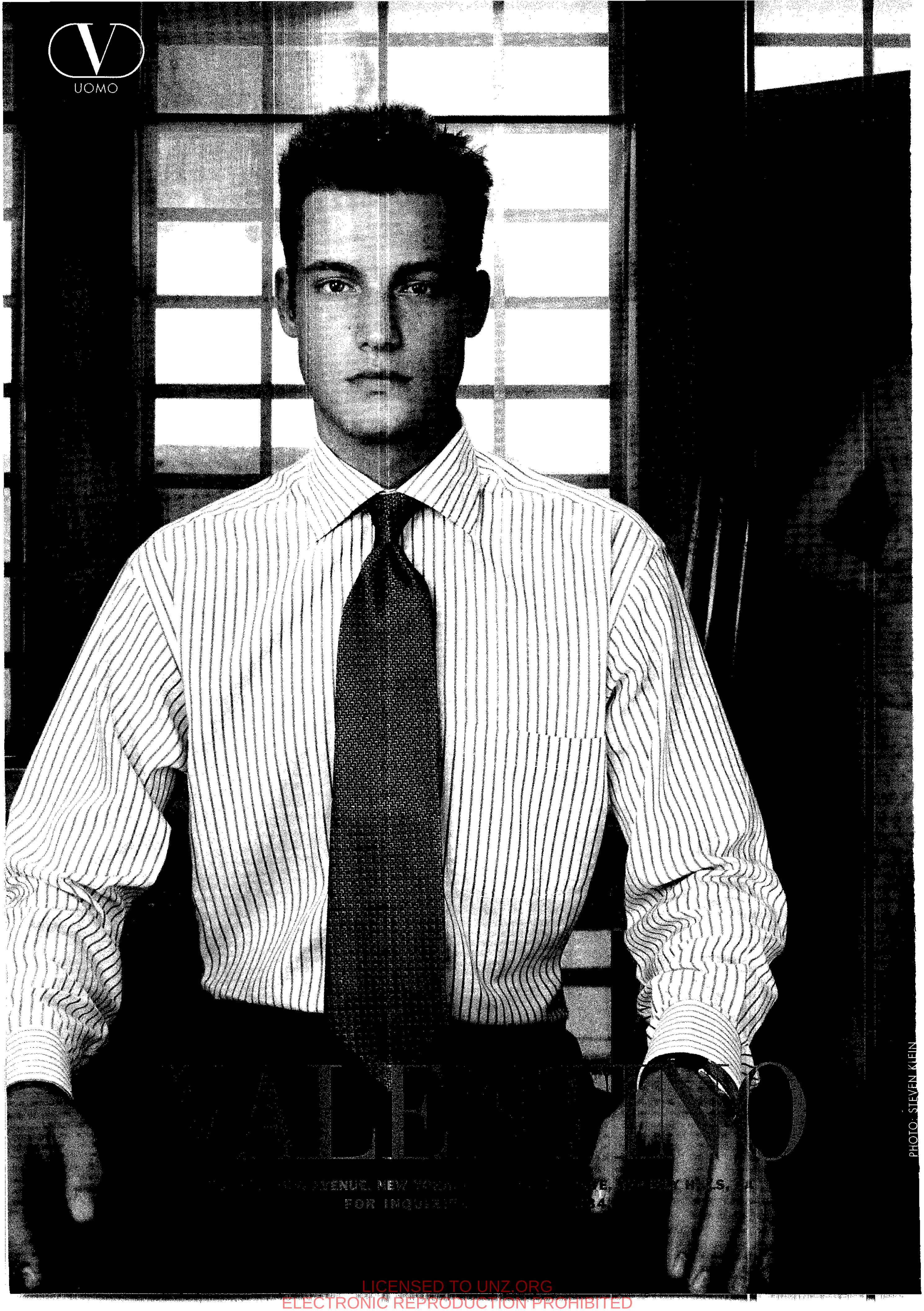
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PHOTO: STEVEN KLEIN

NALS: Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE THIEF** (7/20/98): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE TRUMAN SHOW** (6/15/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **UNMADE BEDS:** The Screening Room. . . . **WHY DO FOOLS FALL IN LOVE:** Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **WITHOUT LIMITS** (9/14/98): Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII. . . . **WRONGFULLY ACCUSED:** Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and State.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2 AND 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** A newly edited version of "Touch of Evil." (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) . . . **THEATRE 3:** The newly edited version of "Touch of Evil."

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films made by the German UFA studios. Sept. 17 at 2:30: "The Blue Angel" (1929, Josef von Sternberg; in German, with no English subtitles). . . . Sept. 17 at 6: "Metropolis" (1926, Fritz Lang; silent, with German intertitles). . . . Sept. 18 at 2:30: "Faust" (1926, F. W. Murnau; silent, with German intertitles). . . . ¶ Sept. 17 at 6: Films by Stan Brakhage, one program in a series about the history of 8-mm. films and videos in the United States. . . . ¶ Sept. 18-19 at 1: "The Art of Vision" (1961-65; Brakhage). . . . ¶ A program of films directed by Susumu Hani; in Japanese, with English subtitles. Sept. 18 at 6:30 and Sept. 21 at 6: "Bad Boys" (1961). . . . Sept. 19 at 2 and Sept. 21 at 2:30: "Children Hand in Hand" (1963). . . . Sept. 19 at 5: "Bride of the Andes" (†). . . . Sept. 20 at 2: "She and He" (1963). . . . Sept. 20 at 5: "The Inferno of First Love" (1968). . . . ¶ Sept. 18 at 8 and Sept. 19 at 5:30: Eight short films by Doris Chase. . . . ¶ Sept. 20 at 2:30: "Split" (1981, Ardele Lister), "The Adventures of a Nurse, Part I and II" (1976, Eleanor Antin), "Fourth of July in Saugerties" (1973, Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot), and "Dusi and Kenö" (1989, Péter Forgács, in Hungarian). . . . ¶ Sept. 20 at 5: A program of seven short films, by Bill Morrison and others. . . . ¶ Sept. 21 at 6:30: "Kino-Glaz" (1924, Dziga Vertov; a Russian silent film, with Russian intertitles). . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 2:30 and 6: "Ivan the Terrible, Part II" (1946, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian). . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 2:30: "Fall of the Romanov Dynasty" (1927, Esther Shub; a Russian silent film, with English intertitles).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of Chinese films, made between 1933 and 1949; in Mandarin, with English subtitles. Sept. 16 at 2: "Along the Sungari River" (1947, Jin Shan). . . . Sept. 18 at 2 and 6:15 and Sept. 19 at 8:15: "San Mao, the Little Vagabond" (1949, Zhao Ming and Yan Gong). . . . Sept. 18 at 4 and 8 and Sept. 19 at 6: "The Lights of Ten Thousand Homes" (1949, Shen Fu). . . . Sept. 19 at 4 and Sept. 20 at 6: "Volcano in the Blood" (1932, Sun Yu). . . . Sept. 20 at 4 and 8: "Spring Silkworms" (1933, Cheng Bugao). . . . Sept. 21 at 6:15: "Small Toys" (1933, Sun). . . . Sept. 21 at 8:30: "The Goddess" (1934, Wu Yongang). . . . Sept. 22 at 6:15: "The Highway" (1934, Sun). . . . Sept. 22 at 8:30: "Life and Death" (1936, Ying Yunwei). . . . ¶ Sept. 17 at 2, 6, and 9: "Nashville" (†). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Sept. 19-20 at 2: "We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story" (†).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films directed by John Huston. Sept. 19 at 2: "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (1948). . . . Sept. 19 at 4:30: "The Battle of San Pietro" (†) and "Let There Be Light" (1946). . . . Sept. 20 at 2: "The Asphalt Jungle" (1950). . . . Sept. 20 at 4:30: "Moulin Rouge" (1952).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Sept. 20 at 7, the feature will be "Mr. Skeffington" (1944, Vincent Sherman), with Bette Davis and Claude Rains.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3587)—Sept. 16 at 2:30 and 6, Sept. 18-19 at 2:30 and 7:30, and Sept. 20 at 2:30: Seven programs of short films using the art of puppetry.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Sept. 16 at 6:30: "Berkeley in the Sixties" (1990, Mark Kitchell). . . . Sept. 16 and Sept. 21 at 8: "Down by Law" (1986, Jim Jarmusch). . . . Sept. 16 at 10 and Sept. 21 at 10: "My Dinner with André" (†). . . . Sept. 17 and Sept. 22 at 8: "The Unbelievable Truth" (1989, Hal Hartley). . . . Sept. 17 and Sept. 22 at 10: "Stand and Deliver" (1988, Ramon Menendez). . . . Sept. 18 at 6: "The Man Who Left His Will on Film" (1970, Nagisa Oshima). . . . Sept. 18 at 7:15: "Lost, Lost, Lost" (1976, Jonas Mekas). . . . Sept. 18 at 8: "Slacker" (1989, Richard Linklater). . . . Sept. 18 at 10: "Metropolitan" (1989, Whit Stillman). . . . Sept. 19 at 4: "Vampyr" (1932, Carl Dreyer; in German). . . . Sept. 19 at 6: "Herbert's Hippopotamus: A Story of Revolution in Paradise" (1996, Paul Alexander Juytilainen). . . . Sept. 19 at 8: "Poison" (1990, Todd Haynes). . . . Sept. 19 at 10: "Daughters of the Dust' (1991, Julie Dash). . . . Sept. 20 at 6: "The Strawberry Statement" (1970, Stuart Hagman). . . . Sept. 20 at 8: "Clerks" (1993, Kevin Smith). . . . Sept. 20 at 10: "The Brothers McMullen" (1994, Edward Burns). . . . Sept. 22 at 8 and 10: "La Chinoise" (1967, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CHELSEA WEST, 333 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CORONET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.
EMBASSY 1, 2, AND 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
REGENCY, Broadway at 67th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON 1 AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY 1 AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.

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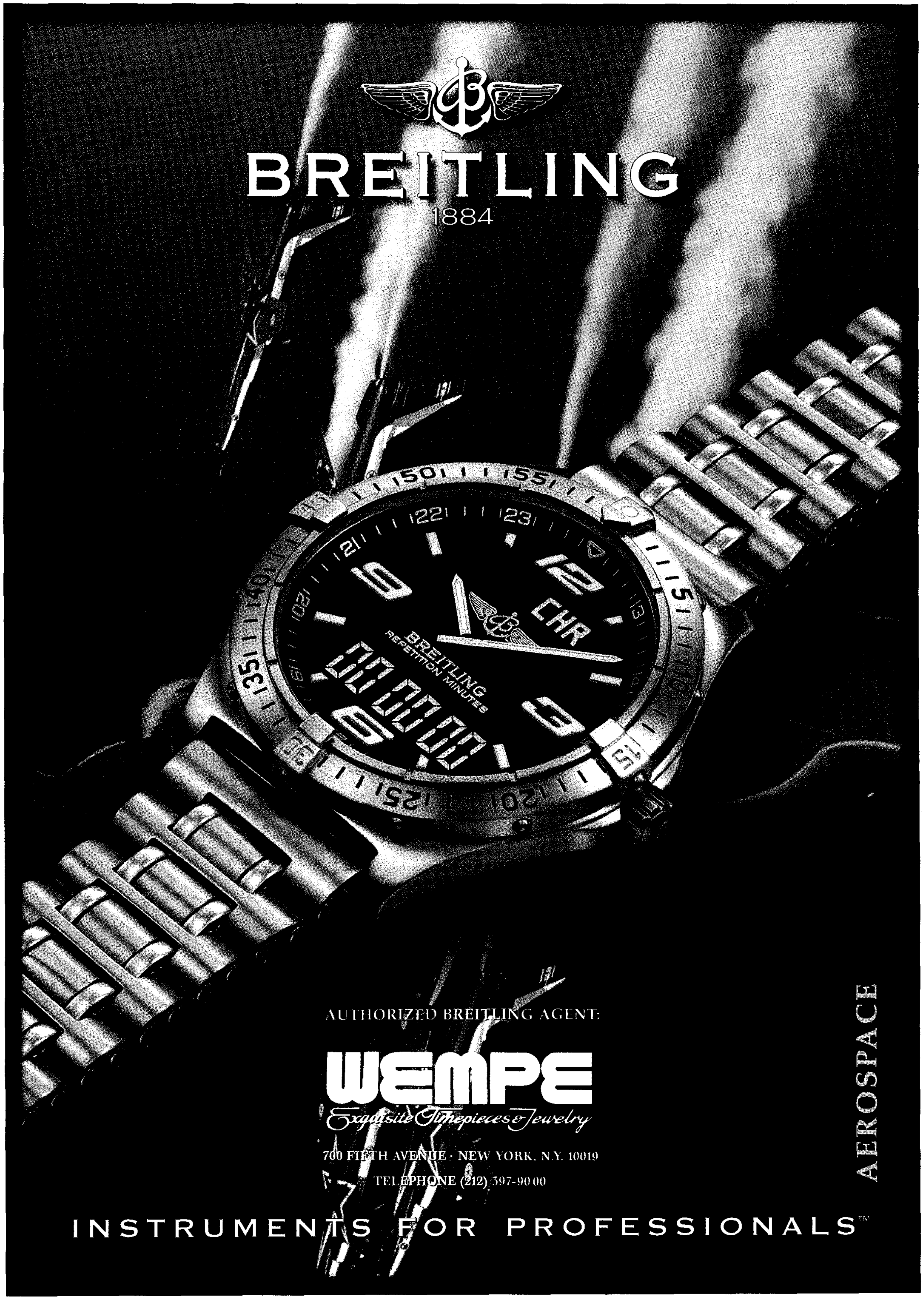
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THE NEW YORKER

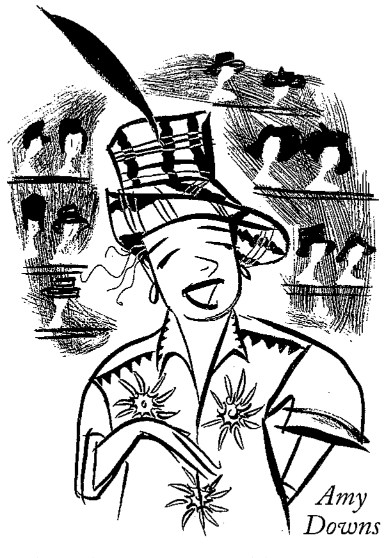
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Susan Orlean visits some city shopkeepers as they prepare for fall.

SPECIAL TODAY

If, by any chance, you were down on the Lower East Side during the summer and you peeked into an open doorway and noticed a tall, pink-cheeked woman in her underwear with her feet in tubs of ice water and with a large fur hat on her head, it was probably Amy Downs, the hatmaker, working on her winter line. If you passed a storefront nearby with a “Giuliani Is a Jerk!” sticker on the door and dozens of hats on display—unusual hats, shaped like milk cartons or made of washcloths or adorned with flowers fashioned from plastic grocery bags—that was Amy's store. In the summer, Amy's customers are mostly hat people—you know, the kind of people who wear hats as habitually as they wear underwear and have permanent dents in their hair. In cold weather, the store, which is called Amy Downs Hats, attracts not just hat people but many others who have warmth issues. Understandably, winter is the main event for a hatmaker. Unfortunately, winter hats get designed in the most sultry of times, starting in July. “I need to have the winter hats in the store by the first of September because the hat people are hat-hungry,” Amy said the other day. “Everyone else is still thinking about summer. Non-hat people come in later, in January or February, when they suddenly realize their heads are cold.”

Amy's workshop is in a windowless ground-floor space that has no air-conditioning. Each hat is handmade, and each hat gets tried on a lot before it is sent over to the store. Recently, one of Amy's assistants developed a rash on his forehead from trying on too many boiled-wool berets during a heat wave. Amy herself has been known to take a cold shower every ten minutes and usually wears nothing but lingerie when she's making her winter merchandise. This helps, but sometimes she's working on a hat and tries it on and maybe she'll get distracted and then after a little bit she'll notice that sweat is streaming off her face even though she's hardly wearing anything, and at last she'll remember that she forgot to take off the wool/fur/padded/triple-weight/stormproof winter hat she'd tried on. “I'm amazed by heat,” she explained. “I'm from Minnesota, and I basically grew up on a skating rink.” She gazed dreamily into middle space and said, “I remember one Christmas getting this red skating hat with red pompoms all over it, and I just died and went to Heaven.” On this particular day, she looked very un-Minnesotan: She was wearing chartreuse-and-black houndstooth pants and a jungle-print guayabera shirt. She picked up a felt cloche trimmed with fake beaver fur and put it on. “This is from my new woolly line,” she said. Her forehead beaded.



Amy Downs

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Here's a question: Is there such a thing as fall or winter clothing in places that don't have fall and winter? Is there, for example, a winter-weight sari?

“Why not?” This is the salesman at Sagar Sari Palace, a store with hundreds of rolls of spectacular sari fabric, situated in the Little India neighborhood of Jackson Heights, Queens.

Maybe it doesn't get cold in India.

“Oh, yes, it does. There's snow over there. People over there are skating sometimes.”

Then there is such a thing as a winter sari?

“Did I say that? No, I did not. Saris you can wear anytime, any season. They're all the same, easy to wear and easy to take off.”

So when it's really cold outside . . .

“You wear your sari with, oh, what do you call those? Thermal underwear. You buy them at the Army-Navy store. Then you put the sari on over it. Nobody knows you're wearing it. I don't know, *you* might be wearing thermal underwear right now. It doesn't show, so how would I know?”

It's ninety-one degrees outside.

“When it's very cold, the Indian people wear a Kashmiri scarf over their saris. I'll show you one. This one is a blend of wool and other things. The one-hundred-per-cent wool ones, those you can wear without any clothes, you just put on the scarf and go outside naked and it feels very good. You might even feel hot.”

A grave, gray-haired man joins us. This is Vijay Kohli, the owner of Sagar Sari Palace.

“Can I help you?”

Do you have anything new for fall?

“We get something new every two weeks, all year round. We just got shaded charmeuse, and this crinkle georgette, and some striped chiffon with metallic. That sequinned fabric, that's not so new. It's a disco fabric. The women always want something new. Some women have a hundred saris and still want fifty or sixty more. Fall is very

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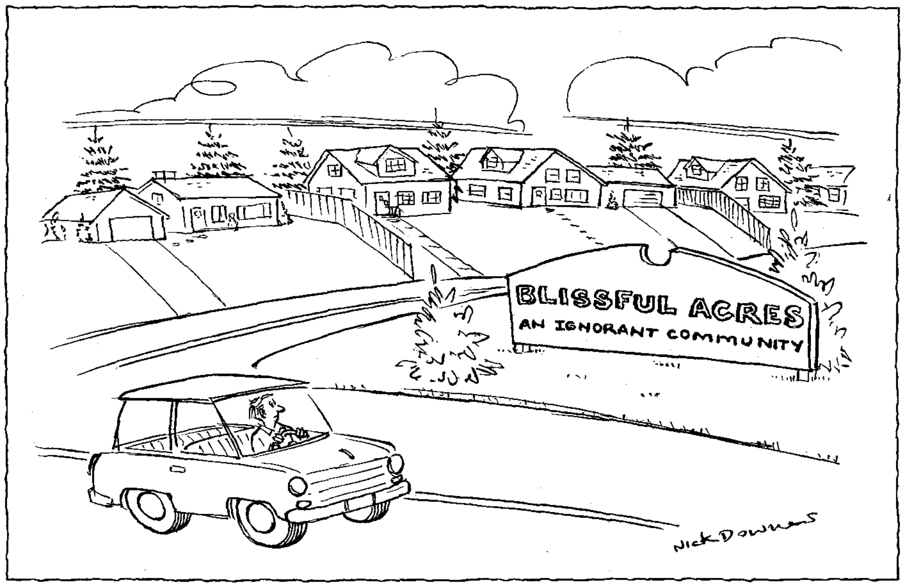
busy for us because everyone is back from vacation in India, and the holy season is soon. For festivals, everyone wants saris with more metallic. And the flare style is going on right now, you know, so they want the flared Punjabi dresses.”

Do people worry about the cold weather coming up?

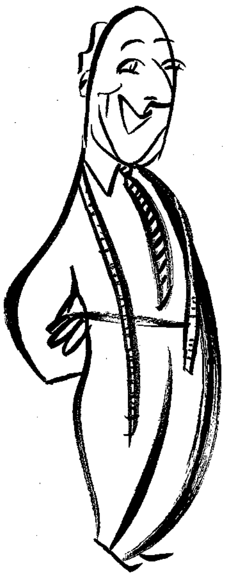
“Yes, but they just put on a coat. It’s true, most Indian people aren’t used to it. I have been in this country for twenty-five years and I am accustomed to winter. The worried ones are the newcomers. They feel too much of a chill.”



The schoolgirl look has always been big for fall, except among schoolgirls. After all, they *live* the schoolgirl look. The other day at Marsha D.D., an Upper East Side boutique that is the axis of fashion for private-school students, a sales rep tried to peddle some plaid barrettes to Marsha Drogin Dayan, the store’s owner. Plaid barrettes! No way! “These prep-school girls are in plaid all day,” Marsha explained. “They don’t want anything all matchy-matchy, and they do not want more plaid. Even if it’s the cutest micro-mini.” What, then, do matriculating pre-women who shop at Marsha D.D. want? Petit Bateau T-shirts, size-0 dark-rinse denim Mavi bell-bottoms with a twenty-six-inch bell circumference, flannel pajamas printed with huge pink lipsticky kisses. For after-school hours, of course.

Fall is superbig in children’s clothing; in fact, in the industry, time is reckoned not in calendar years but in units known as Back to Schools. Marsha D.D. has been in business for three Back to Schools, or two years. Back to School starts in midsummer, when many fashion-savvy seven-year-old enrollees of Sacred Heart or Spence or Brearley or St. David’s or St. Bernard’s or Browning or Ramaz or Trinity or Trevor or Columbia Grammar will persuade their nannies or grandmas that they have plenty of crisp, sober school uniforms but it is, like, majorly important to go shopping for extracurricular gnarly playclothes so they’ll have the right look for all the fall ’98 pizza parties. The other day, the store was crowded with Back-to-Schoolers: an eleven-year-old trying on a navy cocktail dress; a mother-and-daughter team arguing over striped T-shirts; a little girl wearing a camisole with appliquéd monkeys and trying on a sweater with fake-fur trim; two kids pawing through a long rack of slumber-party outfits. Marsha eased her way around the store, answering questions on the fly. “Smallest size in that? A zero.” “I think she could take a junior in that, really. Kids today, they’re huge.” “An airplane outfit? For Florida or for a ski trip? Try the Hard Tail sweats.” “Charcoal gray. It’s the color of the season for adults and kids. A kind of stripped-down minimalist chic. And I don’t carry red. Boys just won’t wear it, and, besides, it ruins the laundry.”

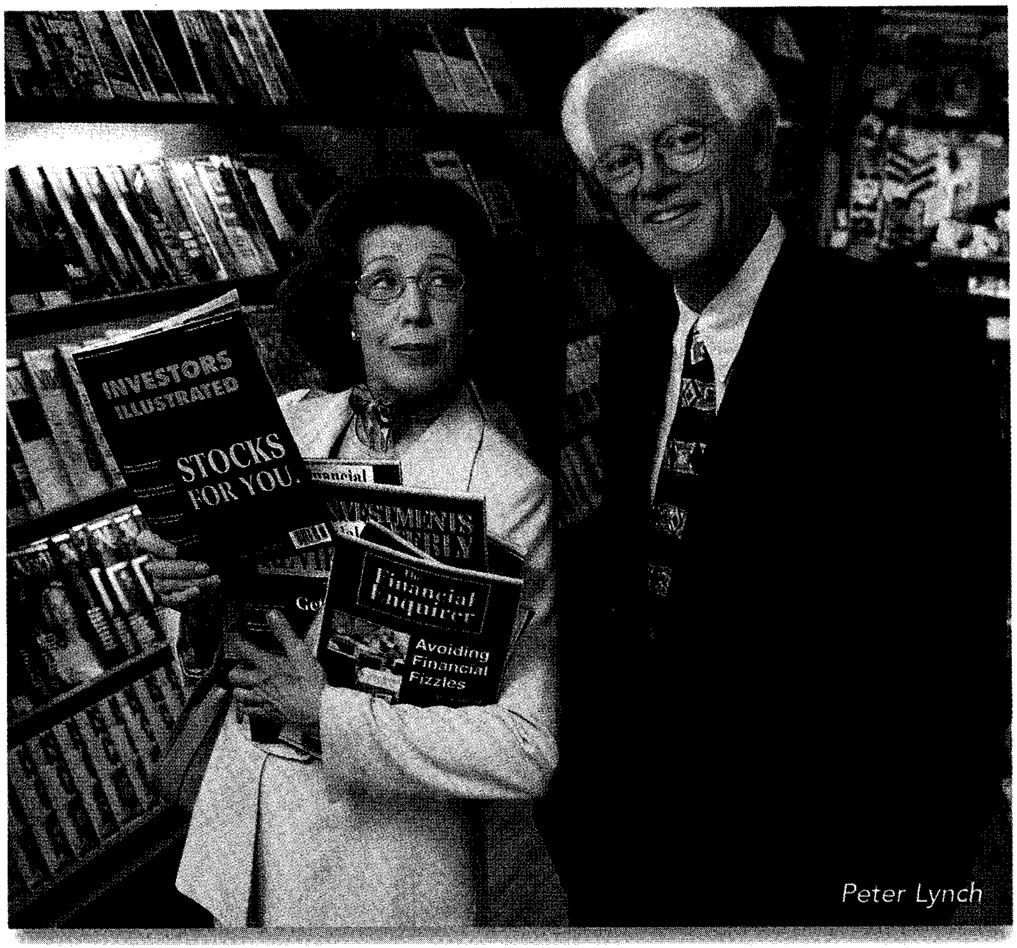
“Today’s fabrics are year-round,” John McGuinness was saying the other day. “Mainly it’s a poly-crêpe. Of course, your bishops always want the top of the line, the tropical-weight worsted wools. And a priest stationed in the Tropics, he probably wants something in a white lightweight washable.”


John McGuinness

The phone rang. “Duffy & Quinn,” McGuinness answered. He listened for a moment, tapping absentmindedly on the Official Catholic Directory on his desk. “Sure, Reverend,” he said into the phone. “I think a white cassock with a kente-cloth stole would look good.” Pause. “I don’t think you need a sash if you have a stole. . . . You know, this white cassock I have here is going to fit you good, Reverend.” He hung up. “As I was saying,” he said, “there’s plenty of steam heat and air-conditioning everywhere these days, so the Catholic, the Episcopalian, the Baptist, the Eastern Orthodox, they can wear their ceremonial vestments year-round. They’re pretty seasonless.”

Duffy & Quinn, Apparel for the Clergy, was founded more than fifty years ago. The retail store is in a sunny window-shopper-proof fifteenth-floor loft in the Garment District. People who shop at Duffy & Quinn have a calling: They want a mitre with gold embroidery, or an off-white alb, or a scoop-necked chasuble, or a black suit and a black neckband shirt. Sometimes, according to McGuinness, the manager, and Marvin Goldman, the owner of Duffy & Quinn, the clergyperson is the one least aware of this calling. “It’s his mom or his sister or his aunt who notices,” Goldman likes to say. “They’re the ones who will say, ‘Reverend, look, we have *got* to get you some new threads.’ ”

The height of the fall ecclesiastical shopping season is in November, when the national conference for Catholic bishops has its annual meeting, in Washington, D.C., and representatives from Duffy & Quinn are invited down to hold a trunk show. Otherwise, men and women of the cloth usually shop when the spirit moves them. This particular afternoon, for instance, shoppers included the Reverend Dr. Glen C. Missick,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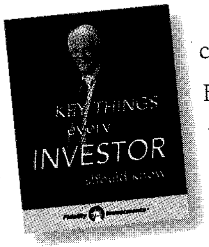
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of the Church of the Master, in Harlem, and Wayne and Janet McKenzie, who were buying a present for their pastor, in New Jersey. "No particular occasion," Wayne McKenzie explained. "We just try to be Christlike and giving." The Reverend Missick, dressed in a civilian outfit of relaxed khakis, a white "Olympics 1998" golf shirt, and a white baseball hat, was browsing through the fancy stoles while McGuinness showed the McKenzies a pumpkin brocade pulpit robe with a chocolate velvet lapel.

"It's a gorgeous item, right?" McGuinness asked them. He displayed another robe, in a shimmery black material. "And how about this? This is the fabric of the year, brand new. It's a silky brocade, for a subtler, richer look. It's a little more modern-looking, since it's a new '98 fabric."

The Reverend Missick, a strapping man with a serene gaze, looked a little lost. "What's this?" he asked, pointing to a rough brown robe.

"That's your standard monk," McGuinness answered. The Reverend then took a white cassock from its hanger and turned to McGuinness.

"Excuse me, can I use this for a funeral?" he asked.

"Sure, no one is really doing black for funerals anymore," McGuinness said.

"What about Methodists?"

"I think it would be fine for Methodists," McGuinness said. "Where's the funeral?"

"The Caribbean," the Reverend said. "I just don't know what to wear. I'm trained Presbyterian, and my church is in Harlem, but I'll be preaching a Methodist funeral in the Bahamas in two weeks, and I'm confused." He tried on the cassock. "How does this look?"

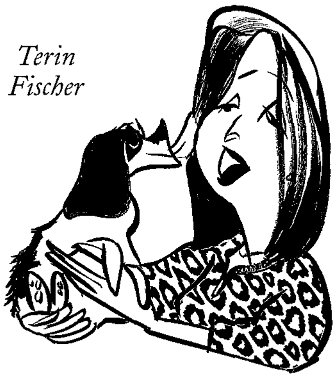
McGuinness smiled and said, "Great, but that one's on hold for another reverend. Try this." He handed Missick a milk-white alb. "This is a cold-water-wash fabric and it closes with Velcro, so it's easy in, easy out. Plus it hangs well, so if you have any lumps and bumps it covers you nicely." The Reverend put it on and glanced uncertainly in the mirror. He turned back to the rack and pulled out a white cassock trimmed with red cord and a short cape. "I have this one," he said. "I wonder if I could just wear this for the funeral." All of a sudden, he stiffened, as if he had had a revelation. "Oh, my goodness, is this supposed to be a cardinal's robe?"

"It's a real Catholic kind of look, but it's not a cardinal's robe," McGuinness said.

The Reverend Missick swallowed. "So I haven't been violating anything?"

"Reverend, listen, this is 1998. Things are flexible. Anyway, don't worry, you're not going to clash with any cardinals."

By now, the late-summer late-day light was yellowing, and traffic was strung out on the avenue below like Christmas trim. The McKenzies had settled on both the pumpkin brocade and the black silky robe for their pastor and were waiting as McGuinness packed the items in a long white garment bag. The Reverend Missick wandered from mitres to hand-stitched stoles and back again. When McGuinness finished with the McKenzies, he went over to the minister, cocked his head, and said, "Reverend, are you sure you don't want that alb? It's cool, and it's very versatile." The Reverend chewed his lip, contemplating. "Think it over," McGuinness went on. "I want you to be happy. My mission isn't to sell. My mission is to make you look good, so you can do your job with presence."


Terin Fischer

"Maybe I'll just buy a cross," the Reverend Missick said.

"Do me a favor," McGuinness said, clapping him on the shoulder. "Sleep on it. I don't want you to buy something just to buy something."

The Reverend Missick yanked the brim of his cap and smiled as he walked toward the door. "Thank you," he said. "Maybe I'll just save my money. Which I don't have, anyway."

Even models get sad sometimes. They get sad when awful things happen—like when they size up their wardrobe and realize, "Oh. My. God. I have, like, *way* too many pairs of lime seersucker hip-hugger cargo pants." A sad but resourceful model might then sell the surplus clothing on consignment at Out of Our Closet, in Chelsea, where ordinary people who do not feel that they have enough lime seersucker hip-hugger cargo pants can buy them. Terin Fischer, the owner of Out of Our Closet, likes to help models because she's spent years in the fashion business and she knows that even the top supermodels can wear only one—O.K., *maybe* two—pair of pants at a time.

The other day, with autumn on the way, Terin was thinking about the big loser of summer '98—a completely over-the-top Christian Lacroix pants suit that a sad model had brought to her. "When this suit sells, I'll know the summer is really over," Terin said, cheerily. "You betcha. I can't wait for it to go." She fished the suit off a rack and held it up. It had a fitted jacket and flat-front pants, both made of a stiff blue-and-black gingham cotton, embroidered with oversized red and yellow ox-eye daisies and finished with gold buttons as big as dinner rolls. The suit was so ugly that it probably would have cost a million dollars in a regular store. As Terin was modelling it, a customer across the room glanced up and then strolled over for a look. "Oh, yes," she said, scanning the suit. She then spoke to her handbag in a tiny voice. "What do you think, Baby?" she asked. A miniature poodle who looked about a hundred years old was napping in the handbag. Presumably, she was Baby. After a moment, Baby fixed the suit with an opaque stare.

"Do you like it, Baby?" the customer asked. Suddenly, Baby drew back her little black lips and started to snarl. This reaction seemed directed equally at the suit and at Terin's King Charles spaniel, Stinky Max, who had just emerged from underneath a filmy, almost-floor-length chemise. Terin was still meditating on the Lacroix. "I didn't get as many Europeans in here this summer as I usually do," she said. "I think I might have been able to sell it to a European." Baby snarled again.

Now that fall is nearly here and Terin is getting rid of all her summer stock, what will happen to the suit? "It'll probably end up at the Housing Works Thrift Shop," Terin said. She has absolutely no plans to keep it for herself. "Never," she said. "In fact, today, I'm totally sick of clothes." ◆

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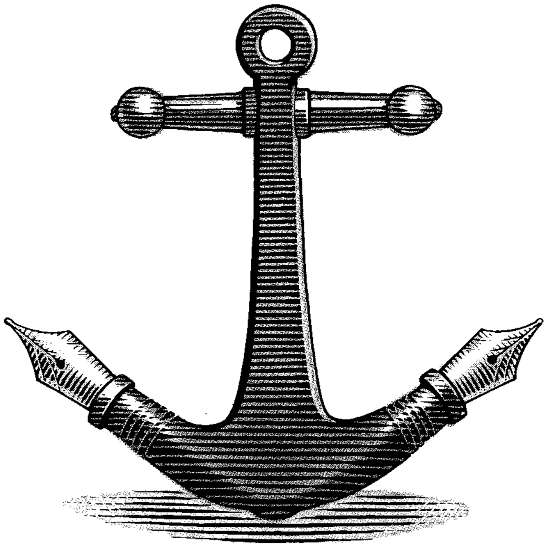
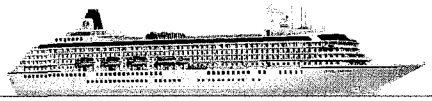


The New Yorker goes to sea.



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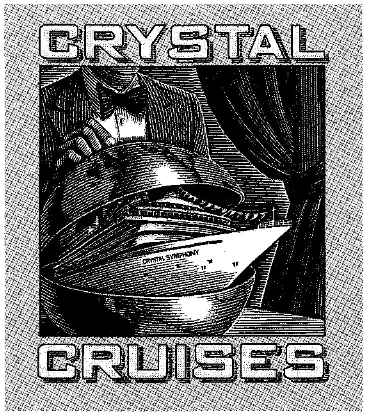

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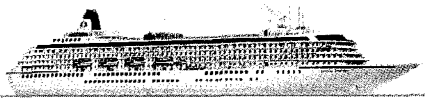

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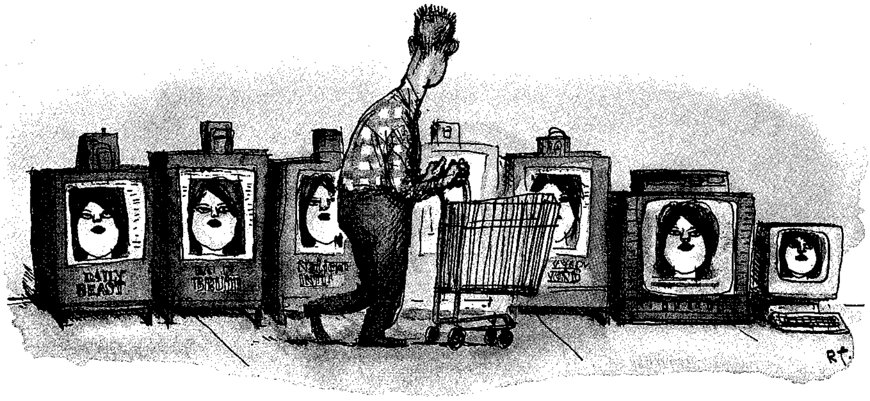
THE POLITICAL SCENE

MONICANOMICS 101

The White House sex scandal in one easy lesson.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

EARLIER this year, the big media companies launched a new product that they were enormously excited about—the Monica Lewinsky story—only to run into a lack of enthusiasm from customers. In survey after survey, people said that they were tired of hearing about the White House intern. Instead of tapering off, however, the production and the consumption of Monica-related stories continued to increase, and at an exponential rate. By last week, when Ken Starr, the Independent Counsel, presented his report to Congress, the newspapers and television networks often appeared to be producing nothing else, and the cable news channels—CNN, MSNBC and Fox—which *were* producing almost nothing else, were receiving splendid ratings.



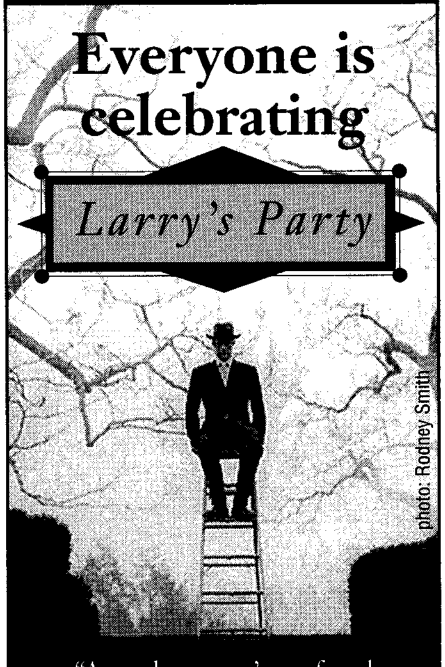
Can "first order conditions" and "utility functions" help us better understand current events?

RICHARD THOMPSON

Can this paradox be explained? To an economist, it suggests that the scandal's endurance as a major media story, despite the distaste it arouses in so many people, is merely an example of how the laws of supply and demand function (or malfunction) in the modern age. Granted, most students don't learn this brand of economics in Econ. 101, but among professional economists it is a rapidly expanding field of research. In the emerging paradigm, which is based on increasing returns to scale, network effects, and information contagion, all sorts of strange things can happen. Supply curves can slope down instead of up, demand curves can slope up instead of down, and phenomena like the Lewinsky scandal can take on a self-reinforcing dynamic of their own.

Start with the supply curve. Like many knowledge businesses, the Monica enterprise originated as a startup. Linda Tripp, frustrated with her career as a civil servant, decided to moonlight as a freelance writer, exploiting information supplied by her "friend" Monica. When Starr and Michael Isikoff, the *Newsweek* reporter, got involved, the elements for a lucrative business were rapidly put in place: a product with guaranteed appeal to consumers (a sex scandal involving the President), a cheap and eager workforce (Starr's investigators, who were being financed by the taxpayers), and a ready distribution channel (the media). Once the Lewinsky business was up and running, it entered a period of explosive growth, such as is experienced by many new businesses if they are lucky.

To understand why this happened, it is necessary to review a few fundamental economic concepts. In elementary textbooks, industries face "diminishing returns to scale," which means that their unit costs of production rise as their output increases, and consequently their supply curves slope upward. As output increases, prices rise. However, the news



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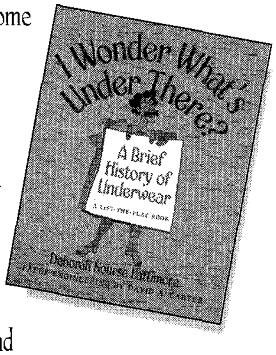

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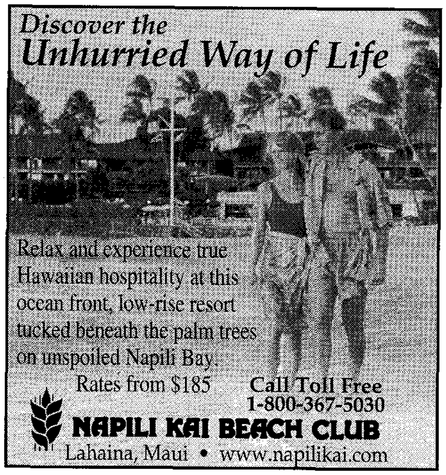
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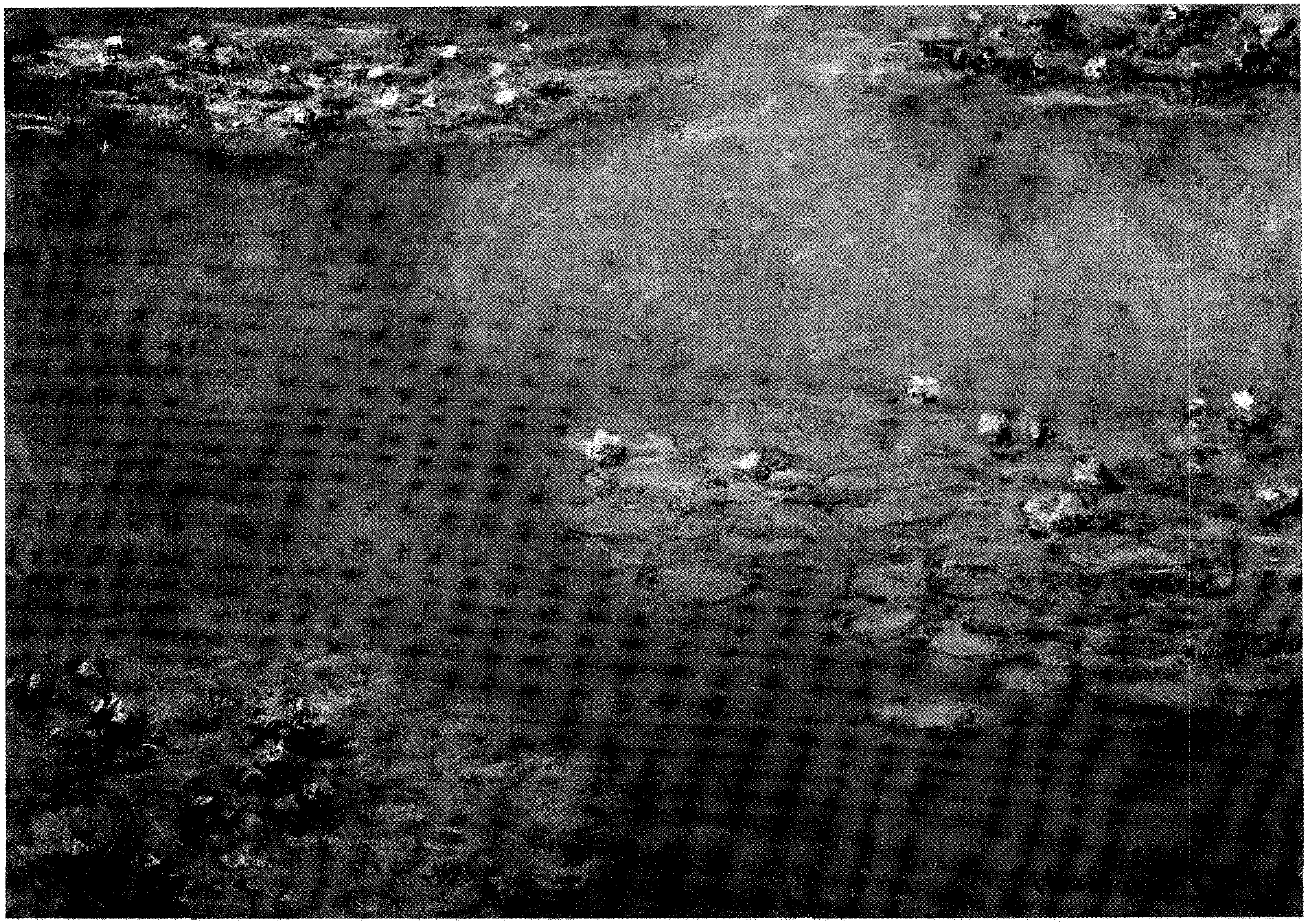
business (as is true of most other information-based industries) doesn't work this way: it operates in an environment of "increasing returns to scale." Once the big money has been spent on establishing a production-and-distribution system, extra programming can be produced and reproduced at little cost, so prices tend to fall as output increases. The only additional inputs a broadcaster needs in order to manufacture more news are an attractive face to read the stories, some film footage to illustrate them, and an assortment of pundits to discuss them. (The pundits cost nothing; they usually appear free, in order to build their brand recognition, which can be exploited in other media, such as newspaper columns, books, and speaking engagements.) In extreme cases, additional output may be so cheap to produce that firms can literally give it away. (This is what Netscape is doing with its Internet browser, for example.)

Companies like General Electric (the parent of NBC), Walt Disney (which owns ABC), and Time Warner (which owns CNN) have now recognized the possibilities generated by the presence of increasing returns. A few years ago, NBC produced three hours of news a day for one channel; these days, it produces twenty-seven hours of news a day for three channels—NBC, CNBC, and MSNBC. Last Wednesday, the day Starr's report reached Capitol Hill, MSNBC, which NBC co-owns with Microsoft, began its Lewinsky coverage at 9 A.M., and continued it, practically uninterrupted, through the day, culminating with two hours of its regular program, "White House in Crisis," at 10 P.M. G.E.'s scandal output wasn't confined to MSNBC. On Wednesday evening, viewers could select MSNBC, CNBC, or NBC for their Monica fix. This may seem like overkill, but there are sound economic reasons, on the demand side of the market as well as on the supply side, for the broadcasters' behavior.

THE big media companies face an acute dilemma: in this information-sodden era, when consumers are presented with a plethora of options for entertainment and diversion, how do you persuade them to sample your goods? The Hollywood film studios have provided one answer: concentrate your resources on a few major releases



Claude Monet, *Water Lilies II* (detail), 1907. Oil on canvas. MFA: Bequest of Alexander Cochrane.

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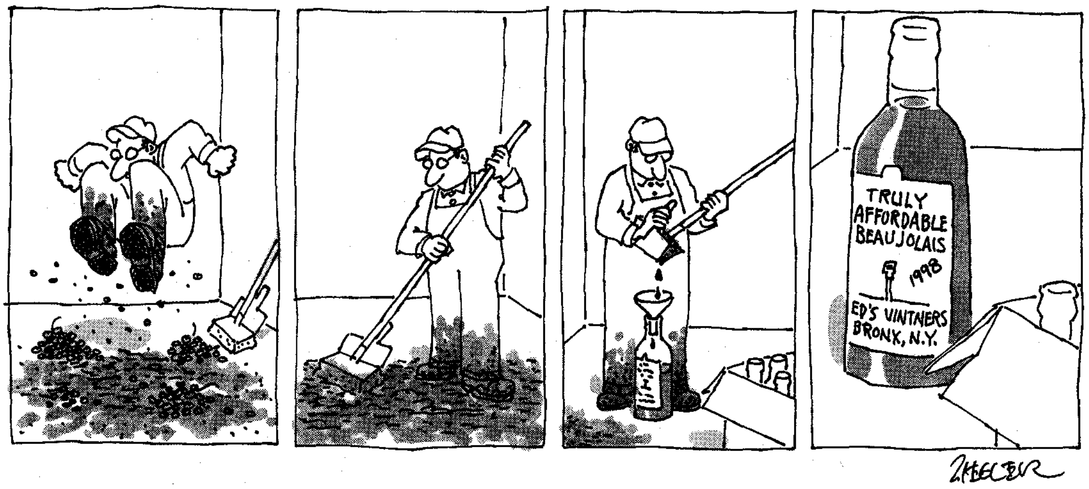


each year. If one of these "event movies" takes off, it pays for the rest of the production slate, and much more besides. Silicon Valley has come up with another possible solution: create a seductive "killer app," such as Adobe Illustrator or Netscape Navigator, which certain consumers will consider essential to their work or leisure. The news producers have reached the same conclusion as the film studios, many of which are owned by the same parent companies, and the result is "event journalism"—gripping human narratives, usually involving celebrities, that go on for months. Stories like these don't come along often, but when one does—the Gulf War, the murder trial of O. J. Simpson, the life and death of Princess Diana, the Monica Lewinsky scandal—the news factories rachet up their marketing and production schedules accordingly.

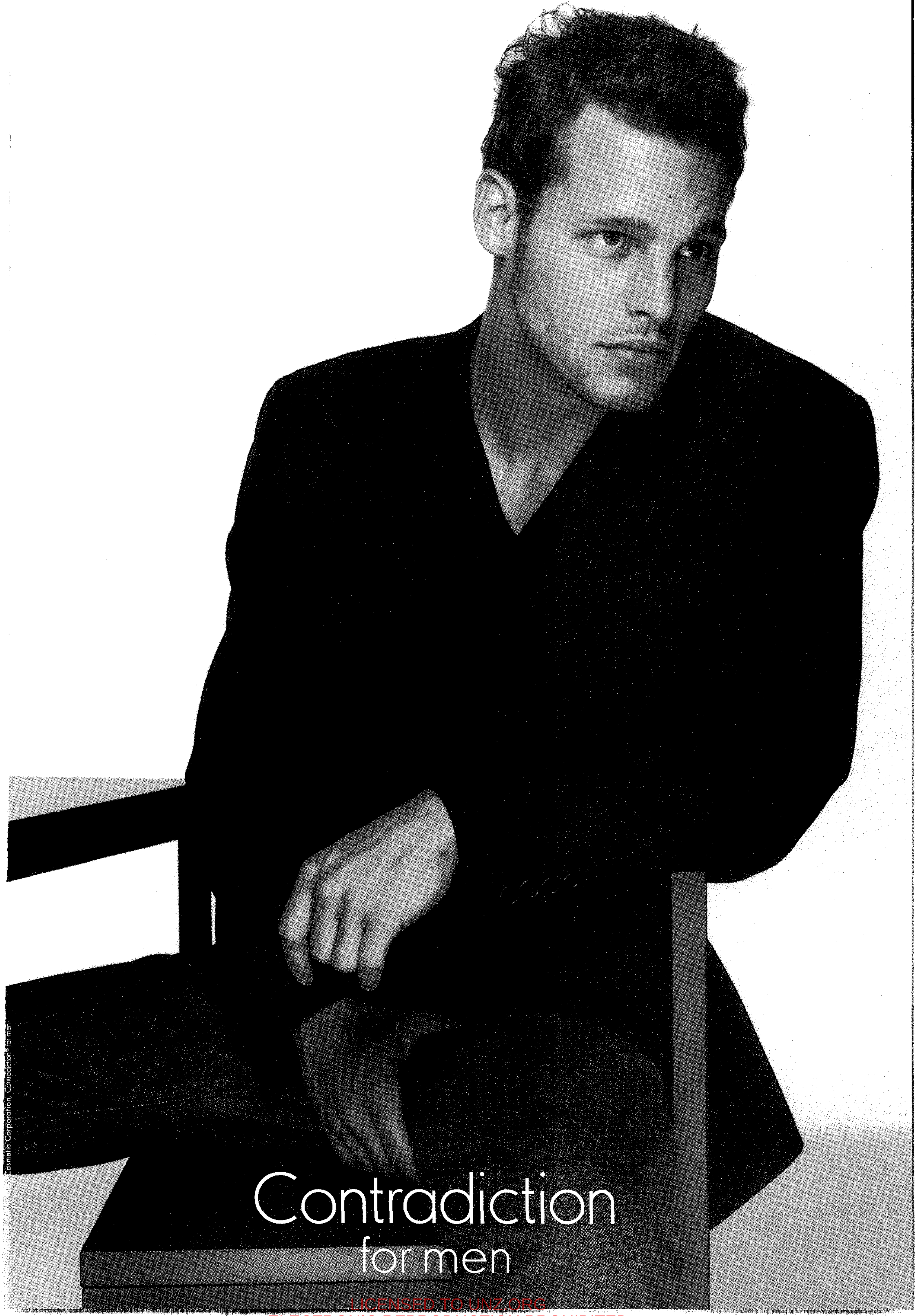
Whatever its faults, event journalism undoubtedly succeeds economically. Between the third quarter of 1997 and the second quarter of 1998, MSNBC's ratings practically doubled. President Clinton's August 17th statement from the White House about the Lewinsky scandal brought CNN its highest viewing figure since the verdict in the O.J. trial and enabled Fox News Channel to record its highest viewing figures ever. Why does this happen? Most journalists are convinced that the explanation is gross hypocrisy—that people tell pollsters they are uninterested in the President's sex life and then log on to the Drudge Report and savor the latest details about Miss Lewinsky's cigar tricks. This may be partly true, but there is another, more convincing explanation—one that relies on the peculiar economics of networks.

Networks come in two varieties: physical networks, such as the national power grid and the Internet, and virtual networks, such as the communities of filmgoers and television viewers. The basic idea underlying network economics remains the same in both varieties, and it is clearly expressed in a forthcoming book, entitled "Information Rules," by two Berkeley professors, Carl Shapiro and Hal Varian: "Other things being equal, it's better to be connected to a bigger network than a smaller one." With computers and telephones, the benefits of bigness are obvious: the more people who are on your network, the more people you can communicate with. (Mathematically speaking, the total benefits are proportional to the square of the number of people on the network, so a network with twenty people attached is four times as useful as a network with ten people attached.) In a virtual network, the benefits are pretty much the same: if all the workers in an office went to see "Saving Private Ryan" last weekend, they all have something to talk about on their lunch break. Anybody who hasn't seen the film pays a social price for not going to the theatre.

"Conversation, which links people through meme transmission, is fundamental to why we buy, and why we want to buy what others are buying," Winslow Farrell writes in his new book, "How Hits Happen: Forecasting Predictability in a Chaotic Marketplace." He also writes, "At some point, we cease to be autonomous purchasing individuals and join the crowd." According to Farrell, a former NASA rocket scientist who is now a partner at Coopers & Lybrand, the key to successful management in the information business is to recognize which products have the potential to create these network effects—economists call them "network externalities"—and promote them as aggressively as possible. This is what Twentieth Century Fox and Paramount did with "Titanic," it is what CNN did with the Gulf War, and it is what MSNBC is trying to do with the Lewinsky story.

Once a news story generates network effects, it enjoys a "positive feedback" process, in which the fact that some people are already talking about it persuades others to show an interest. In due course, a story may "lock in," and rival events will be starved of public attention. People who have invested enough time to learn the minute details of a journalistic "event"—Where was the bloody glove found? What did Kato hear thumping outside his wall? What happened to the golf bag?—are understandably reluctant to move on to another one, where they will have to start over. Consequently, it takes something dramatic to bring the previous event story to an end, or, in the language of television news, "closure": in the O.J. case, that something was the verdict; with Princess Diana, it was her funeral. The Princess dominated Britain's popular newspapers for more than fifteen years. During that period, Fleet Street editors regularly vowed to back off from their intrusive coverage, but the economic logic of event journalism proved too strong to resist.

THE new economics also provides a framework in which it is possible to explain—in part, at least—the strange behavior of Ken Starr. The Independent Counsel has been variously described by his opponents as an arch-conservative, a religious fanatic, and a bumbling incompetent. A better analogy is a Malaysian real-estate developer in the early nineteen-nineties or a factory manager in the former Soviet Union. The key point is that Starr, unlike most American businessmen, faces a "soft-budget constraint": he can spend as much money as he wants, enter whatever market segment he wishes, and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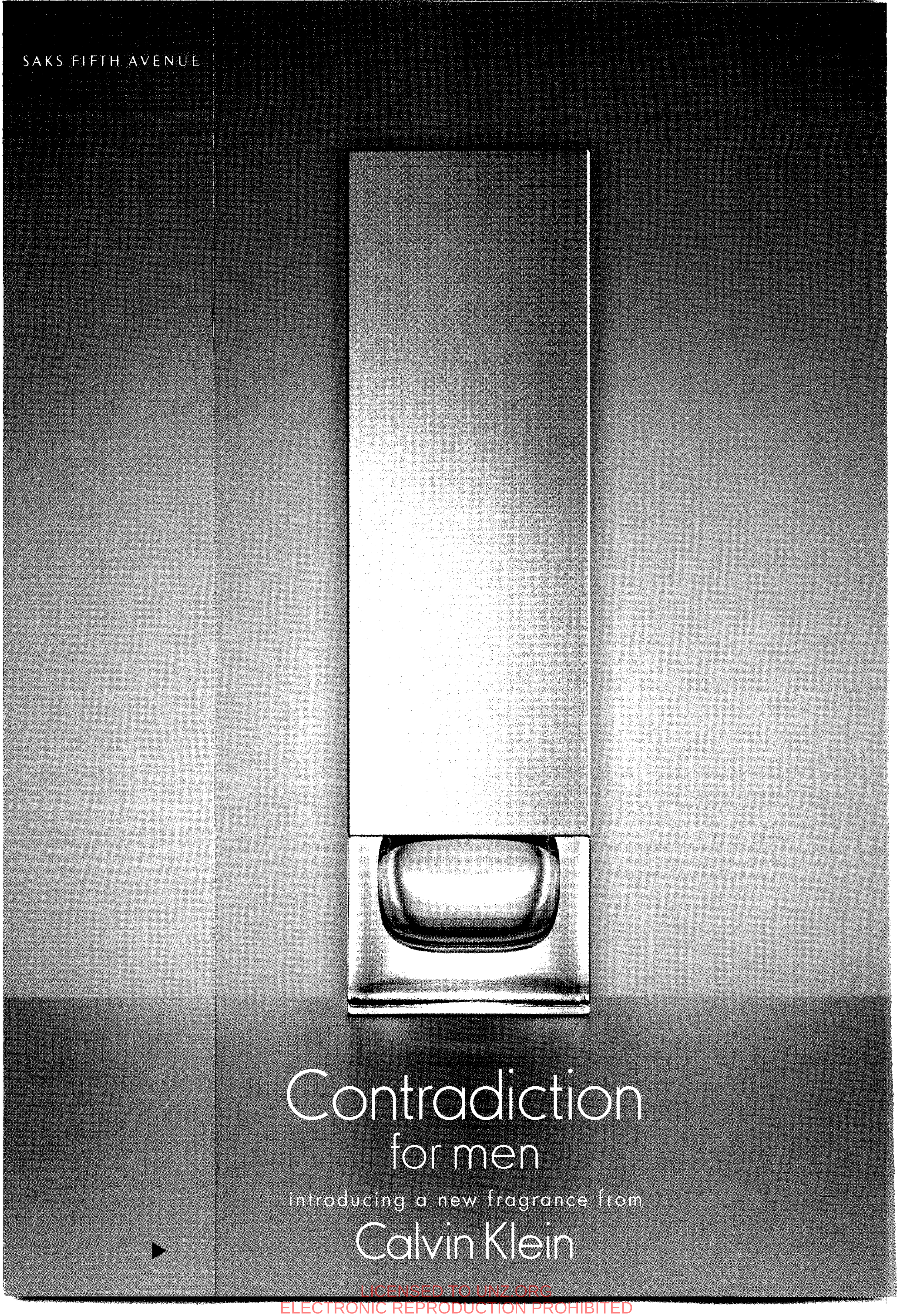
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carry on in this manner indefinitely. Given this setup, it is not surprising that the Whitewater investigation has steadily expanded, venturing into unprofitable markets, such as Vincent Foster's death, Filegate, and Travelgate. A normal C.E.O., having spent his shareholders' capital and failed to produce a marketable product, would have been fired, but Starr was never a normal businessman.

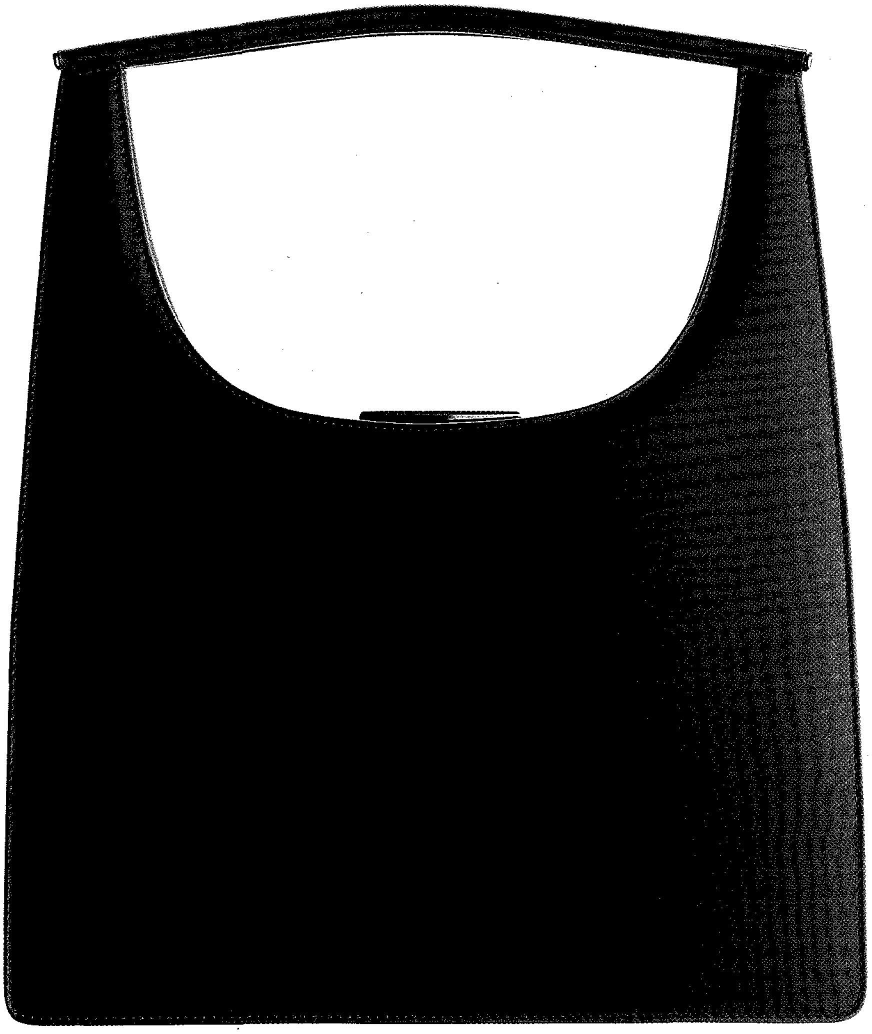
The fault doesn't lie with him; it lies with a statute that provides no incentive for special prosecutors to act in the interests of the people who employ them. There is now an entire branch of economics dealing with the "principal-agent problem," which arises whenever somebody is hired to do a job that cannot be perfectly monitored. In the private sector, a number of ways have evolved to address this conundrum. They include paying workers generous wages, which encourages them not to shirk; granting employees stock options, which aligns their interests with those of the shareholders; introducing contingency fees, which does the same thing; and encouraging hostile takeovers, which allows incompetent managers to be replaced. Unfortunately, it is not clear how to apply these techniques to the public sector, where market forces are largely absent. Paying special prosecutors success fees would be controversial, and so would allowing other lawyers to petition the Justice Department for Starr's job. When the Independent Counsel Act expires next year, Congress is likely to fall back on more politically acceptable options, such as providing Starr's successors with narrower contracts.

As for Bill Clinton, he is by training a lawyer, not an economist, and his recent behavior suggests that he hasn't learned much about the commercial logic underlying the Lewinsky coverage. If his aim was to put the scandal behind him, he needed to provide a dramatic finale—one that would shift the information dynamics in his favor. His failure to do this in his August 17th speech allowed the media pundits to interpret the speech as just another installment in a long-running saga, and his insistence that "even Presidents have private lives" didn't make any lasting impression. From an economic perspective, there is no distinction between public and private. Ever since F.D.R.'s fireside radio chats, media executives have recognized the President as a "killer app"—someone who can be relied upon to cut through the clutter and seize people's attention. In subsequent years, as information has become all but ubiquitous, and the competitive pressures facing the media have continually increased, the zone of privacy surrounding the Oval Office incumbent has shrunk commensurately.

Clinton was aware of this situation when he took up with Monica Lewinsky, and his affair with her presents a powerful challenge to economic theories that explain people's actions in terms of self-interested cost-benefit analysis. (In most economic models, individuals are seen as automatons who maximize "utility functions" by obeying a set of mathematical "first order conditions.") The putative costs of the President's trysts may appear to outweigh any conceivable pleasure he obtained from them, but some economists might argue otherwise. One possibility is that Clinton is a person who enjoys taking gambles just for the sake of doing so, even though he knows he is likely to lose. Economists refer to such people as "risk lovers," compared with the majority of the population, who are "risk averse." Many risk lovers play the horses or frequent casinos, but there is no evidence that the President has speculated in areas outside his romantic life. Another explanation consistent with optimizing behavior is that Clinton discounts the future costs of his actions at a furious rate, and so even potentially disastrous outcomes don't deter him from doing what he wants, precisely because they are in the future. (This is the reasoning that some economists use to explain deadly addictions, like cigarette smoking, as voluntary acts.) A third possibility is that the President underestimated the likelihood of being caught, in which case his cost-benefit sums were biased.

On the other hand, casual sex of the Clinton variety may fall into a vexing category that economists have come to call "non-market transactions." Even the Chicago School, which believes that economics can explain practically everything, has struggled with promiscuity. Richard Posner and Tomas Philipson attempted to explain the persistence of unsafe sex among gay men as a result of rational decision-making, but they weren't very successful. A colleague of theirs at Chicago, the Nobel laureate Gary Becker, tried to construct a broader economic theory of love, but he focussed on the psychological and practical benefits provided by children and families, and not on the momentary pleasures of the flesh enjoyed by the President and his intern. It may be that in Bill Clinton's peculiar case there are limits to the scope of economic analysis. Some things, perhaps, cannot be reduced to a set of mathematical equations. ◆

"I thought I liked babies, but, as it turned out, I mainly like baby clothes."



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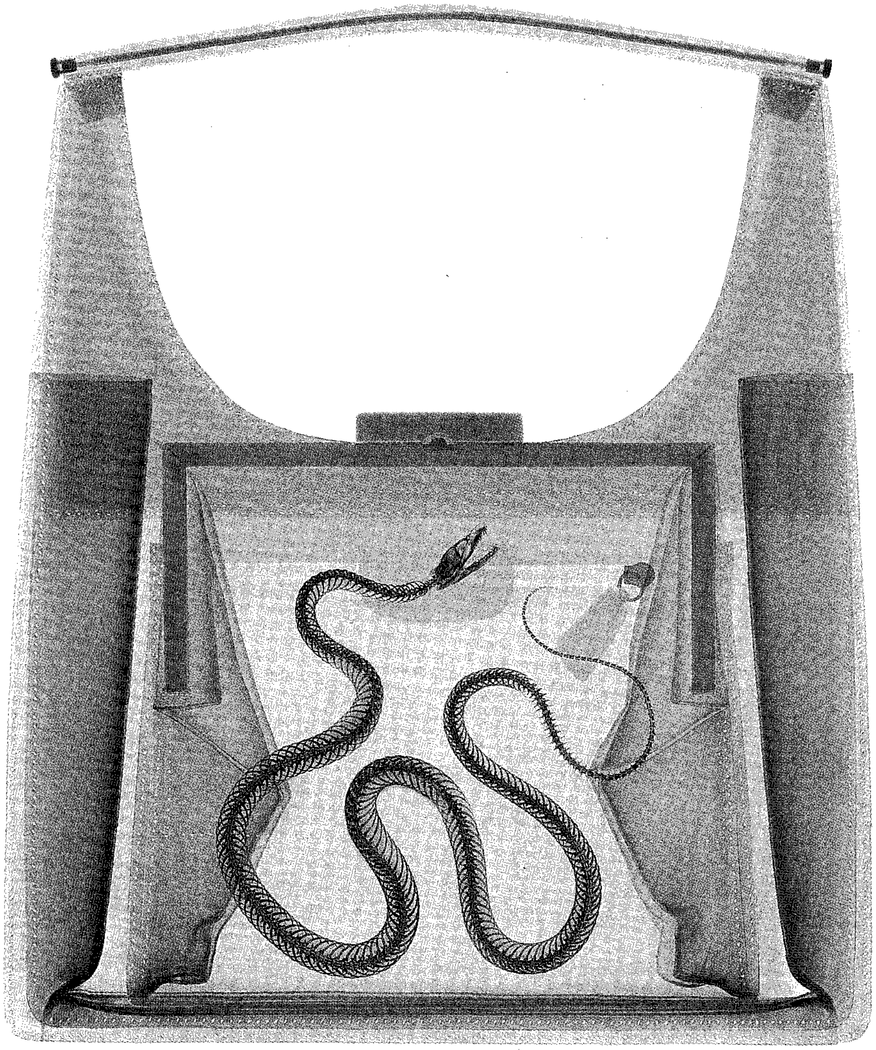

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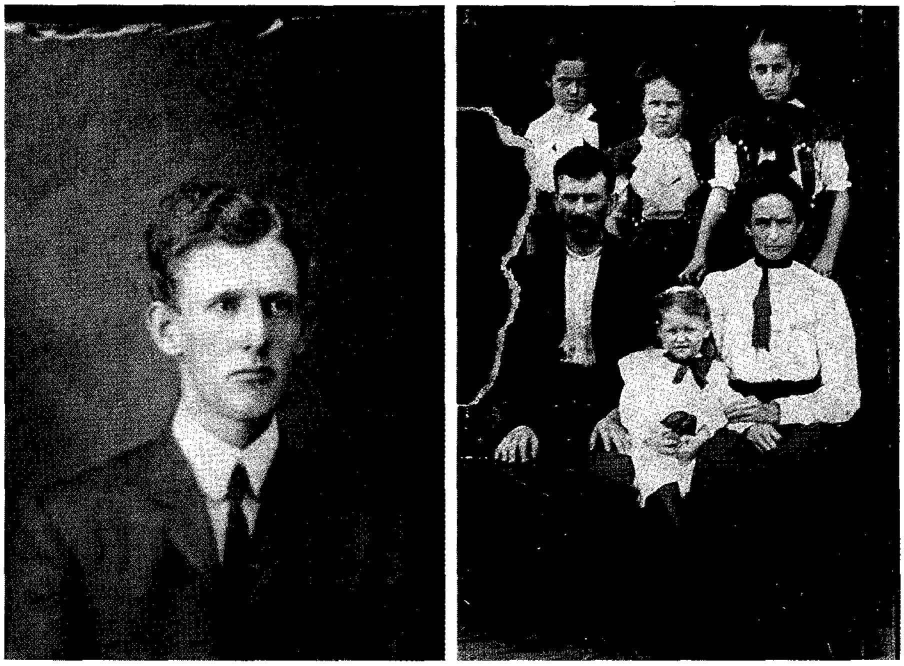
PERSONAL HISTORY

THE QUARE GENE

What will happen to the secret language of the Appalachians?

BY TONY EARLEY

I DO not like, I have never liked, nor do I expect to like watermelon. For the record, I consider this a private, dietary preference, not a political choice, neither a sign of failing character nor a renunciation of Southern citizenship. I simply do not like watermelon. Nor, for that matter, do I like grits, blackberries, cantaloupe, buttermilk, okra, baked sweet potatoes, rhubarb, or collard greens. Particularly collard greens. I don't even like to look at collard greens. But, because I am a Southerner—a North Carolinian, of Appalachian, Scots-Irish descent, the offspring of farming families on both sides—my family finds my refusal to like the foods they like somehow distressing. When I eat at my grandmother's red-roofed, high-ceilinged Victorian barn of a house, in Polk County, North Carolina, my relatives earnestly strive to persuade me that I am making a big mistake by not sampling this or that, that I should just *try* the greens, have just a little *slice* of watermelon, a small *bite* of cantaloupe. They tell me that I will get used to the seeds in blackberries, the mealiness of grits, the swampy odor of greens boiled too long in a big pot. And when I passionately and steadfastly refuse, as I have done for the last thirty-seven years, they stare at me for a few seconds as if they didn't know me, their mouths set sadly, before looking down at their plates as if preparing to offer up a second grace. Then my grandmother pronounces, "Tony Earley, you're just quare."



The author's great-grandfather and grandmother (front row, center). "The word 'quare' contains sea voyages and migrations."

ACCORDING to my edition of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, "quare" is an Anglo-Irish adjective from the early nineteenth century meaning "queer, strange, eccentric." Most other dictionaries, if they list the word at all, will tell you that it is dialectical, archaic, or obsolete, an anachronism, a muted, aging participant in the clamoring riot of the English language. But when spoken around my grandmother's table, by my parents and aunts and uncles and cousins, "quare" is as current as the breath that produces it, as pointed as a sharpened stick. In my family's lexicon, "quare" packs a specificity of meaning which "queer," "strange," "eccentric," "odd," "unusual," "unconventional," and "suspicious" do not. The only adjective of synonymous texture would be "squirrelly," but we are a close bunch and would find the act of calling one another squirrelly impolite. So, in my grandmother's dining room, when "quare" is the word we need, "quare" is the word we use.

Nor is "quare" the only word still hiding out in my grandmother's house which dictionaries assure us lost currency years ago. If I brought a quare person to Sunday dinner at Granny's and he ate something that disagreed with him, we might say that he looked a little peaked. Of course, we might decide that he was peaked not because he had eaten something that disagreed with him but because he had eaten a bait of something he liked. We would say, Why, he was just too trifling to leave the table. He ate almost the whole mess by himself. And now we have this quare, peaked, trifling person on our hands. How do we get him to leave? Do we job him in the stomach? Do we hit him with a stob? No, we are kinder than that. We tell him, "Brother, you liked to have stayed too long." We put his dessert in a poke and send him on his way.

When I was a child, I took these words for granted. They were part of the language I heard around me, and I breathed them in like air. Only when I began to venture away from the universe that revolved around my grandmother's table did I come to realize that the language of my family was not the language of the greater world. I was embarrassed and ashamed when my town-bred classmates at Rutherfordton Elementary School corrected my speech, but by the time I entered college and signed up for an Appalachian-studies class I wasn't surprised to learn that my family spoke a dialect. I had begun to suspect as much, and was, by that time, bilingual: I spoke in the Appalachian vernacular when I was with my family and spoke standard English when I wasn't. This tailoring of speech to audience, which still feels a shade ignoble to me, is not uncommon among young people from my part of the world. In less generous regions of the greater American culture, the sound of Appalachian dialect has come to signify ignorance, backwardness, intransigence, and, in the most extreme examples, toothlessness, rank stupidity, and an alarming propensity for planting flowers in painted tractor tires.

This is not some sort of misguided, Caucasian appeal for ethnicity, nor is it a battle cry from the radical left against the patriarchal oppression of grammar, but the fact is that for me standard English has always been something of a second language. I have intuitively written it correctly from the time I started school, but speaking it still feels slightly unnatural, demands just enough conscious thought on my part to make me question my fluency. When I am introduced to a stranger, when I meet a more showily educated colleague in the English department at Vanderbilt, when I go to parties at which I feel unsure of my place in the evening's social pecking order, I catch myself proofreading sentences before I speak them—adding "g"s to the ends of participles, scanning clauses to make sure they ain't got no double negatives, clipping long vowels to affectless, Midwestern dimensions, and making sure I use "lay" and "lie" in a manner that would not embarrass my father-in-law, who is a schoolteacher from California. Occasionally, even my wife, whose Southern accent is significantly more patrician than my own, will smile and ask, "What did you just say?" And I'll realize that I have unwittingly slipped into the language of my people, that I have inadvertently become "colorful." I'll rewind my sentence in my head so that I can save it as an example of how not to speak to strangers. Only in the sanctity of Granny's house can I speak my mother tongue with anything resembling peace of mind.

IN 1904, a librarian and writer named Horace Kephart, having recently left his wife and children and suffered a nervous breakdown, moved to the mountains around Bryson City, North Carolina. Although he travelled there initially to distance himself from human contact, he soon recovered enough to

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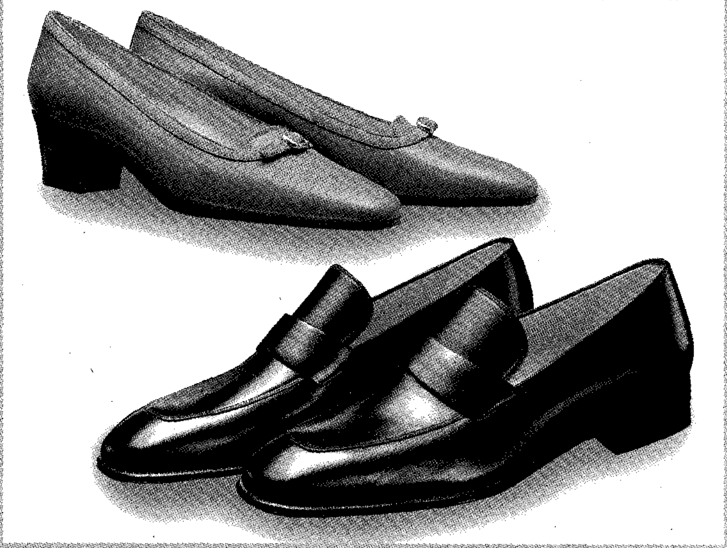

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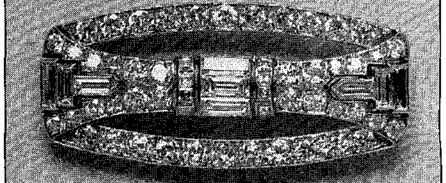

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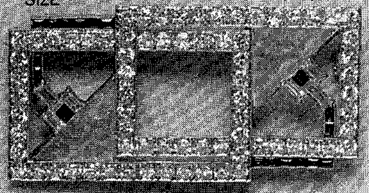

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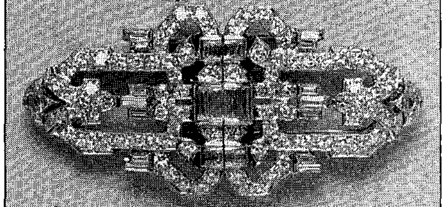

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take an active interest in the world in which he found himself. An avid gatherer of information and a compulsive list-maker, Kephart spent the rest of his life compiling exhaustive journals and records detailing the geography, history, culture, and language of the southern Appalachians—a pursuit that resulted in countless magazine articles, a celebrated handbook, "Camping and Woodcraft," and two editions of a book entitled "Our Southern Highlanders."

Although Kephart had chosen the Appalachians over the deserts of the Southwest somewhat randomly, he arrived in western North Carolina at a particularly fortuitous time for a man of his particular talents. In the roadless hollows of the Blue Ridge and the Smokies, Kephart found a people isolated by their hostile, vertical geography and living largely as their ancestors had, in the later half of the eighteenth century, when the great Scots-Irish migration out of Pennsylvania first filled the region with people of European descent.

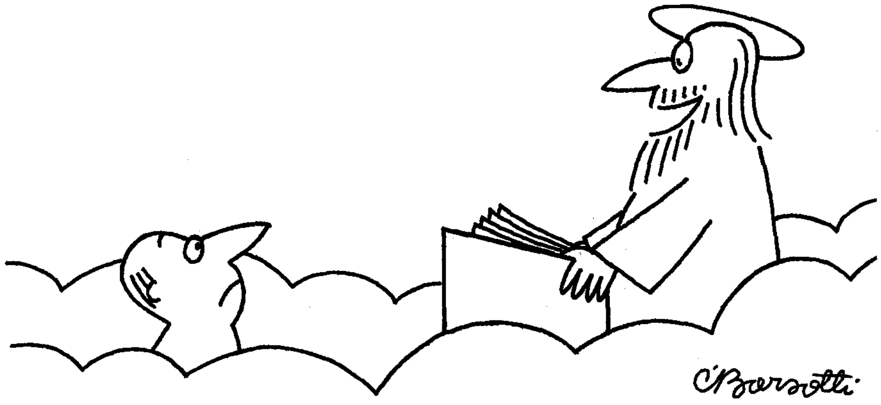
"No one can understand the attitude of our highlanders toward the rest of the earth," Kephart wrote,

> until he realizes their amazing isolation from all that lies beyond the blue, hazy skyline of their mountains. Conceive a shipload of emigrants cast away on some unknown island, far from the regular track of vessels, and left there for five or six generations, unaided and untroubled by the growth of civilization. Among the descendants of such a company we would expect to find customs and ideas unaltered from the time of their forefathers. . . . The mountain folk still live in the eighteenth century. The progress of mankind from that age to this is no heritage of theirs.

Because the Scots-Irish settlers had spoken to and been influenced by so few outsiders, the language they brought with them from Scotland and Ireland, by way of Pennsylvania, had been preserved remarkably intact. And the English dialect that Kephart encountered in North Carolina was in many ways closer to the Elizabethan English of Shakespeare or the Middle English of Chaucer than to anything that had been spoken in England for centuries. Coincidentally, had Kephart come to these mountains a generation later, his research would have been less definitive. Within a few years after his death, in 1931, road-building initiatives, radio, and the Sears, Roebuck catalogue had begun to open even the darkest hollows of the Appalachians to twentieth-century America. In a very short time, the resulting cultural homogenization had turned the southern highlands into a vastly different world from the one that Kephart had originally discovered.

When I first read "Our Southern Highlanders," late last year, it held for me the power of revelation. It told me who I was—or at least where I came from—in a way that I had never fully understood before. All the words I had thought specific to my family had entries in a dictionary compiled from Kephart's research. And all of them—with the exception of "quare," which is a mere two hundred years old—were words of Middle English origin, which is to say anywhere from five hundred to eight hundred years old. Although most of the people I meet today wouldn't have any idea what it's like to eat a bait, Chaucer would have.

Of course, words of Middle English origin are mere babes compared with the words of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew etymology that constitute much of our language. The Latin and Greek roots of the words "agriculture" and



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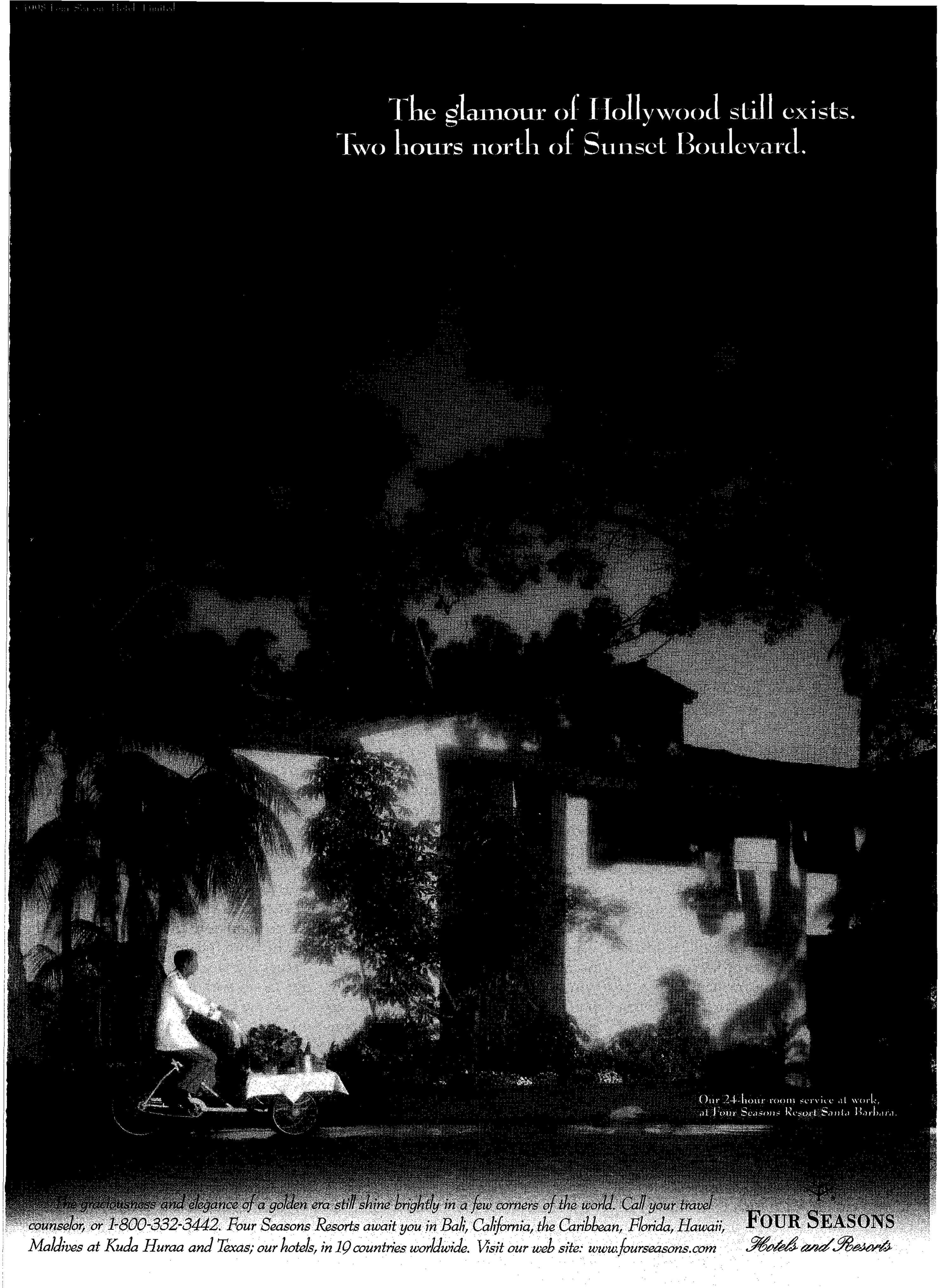
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“barbarian” were old long before the primitive tribes of the British Isles painted their faces blue and grunted in a dialect resembling English. So I am less taken by the age of the words of the Appalachian vernacular which found their way into my grandmother’s house than I am by the specific history they hold.

The word “quare,” for me, contains sea voyages and migrations. It speaks of families stopping after long journeys and saying, for any one of a thousand reasons, “This is far enough.” It speaks to me of generations of farmers watching red dirt turn below plow blades, of young men stepping into furrows when old men step out. It speaks to me of girls fresh from their mothers’ houses crawling into marriage beds and becoming mothers themselves. It bears witness to the line of history, most of it now unmappable, that led to my human waking beneath these particular mountains. If language is the mechanism through which we inherit history and culture, then each individual word functions as a type of gene, bearing with it a small piece of the specific information that makes us who we are, and tells us where we have been. My first cousin Greg and I came down with the same obscure bone disease in the same knee at the same age. For us, the word “quare” is no less a genetic signifier of the past than the odd, bone-eating chromosome carried down through history by one wonders how many limping Scots-Irish.

THE last time I remember talking to my great-grandfather Womack, he was well into his nineties, and our whole family had gathered on the porch of the house he built as a young man, along Walnut Creek, in the Sunny View community of Polk County. When I tell this story, I choose to remember it as a spring day—although it may not have been—simply because I like to think that the daffodils in his yard were blooming. (My grandmother, who is eighty-three now, helped him plant them when she was a little girl.) At some point, everyone else got up and went inside, leaving Paw Womack and me alone on the porch. I was in high school, a freshman or sophomore, and was made self-conscious by his legendary age. He had been born in another century. His father had been wounded at Gettysburg. A preacher’s son, he had never uttered a swear word or tasted alcohol. He had farmed with a mule until he was well into his eighties, and he had never got another car after one that he bought in 1926 wore out. He voted for Woodrow Wilson. He was *historical*. I felt that the family had somehow chosen me to sit with him; I felt that I needed to say something. I got out of my chair and approached him as one would a sacred relic. I sat down on the porch rail facing him. I remember his immense, knotted farmer’s hands spread out on the arms of his rocker. We stared at each other for what seemed like a long time. Eventually, I blushed. I smiled at him and nodded. He smiled back and said, “Who *are* you?”

I said, “I’m Reba’s boy. Clara Mae’s grandson.”

“Oh,” he said. “Reba’s boy.”

If we ever spoke again, I don’t remember it.

It seems significant to me now that when I told Paw Womack who I was I didn’t give him my name. My position as an individual was secondary to my place in the lineage that had led to my sitting on his porch. I identified myself as a small part of a greater whole. *Who are you?* I’m Reba’s boy, Clara Mae’s grandson, Tom Womack’s great-grandson. *Where are you from?* Over yonder. *Why don’t you like watermelon?* I don’t know. I guess I’m just quare.

IRONICALLY, just as I have learned to appreciate the history contained in the word “quare,” I have also had to accept the fact that it is passing out of my family with my generation. Neither I nor my cousins use it outside Granny’s house unless we temper it first with irony—a sure sign of a word’s practical death within a changing language. Of course, no language is a static property: the life cycles of words mirror the life cycles of the individuals who speak them. Every language, given enough time, will replace each of its words, just as the human body replaces each of its cells every seven years. The self-appointed guardians of English who protest that the word "celibate" means "unmarried," and not "abstaining from sexual intercourse," are wasting their time. "Sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraints," Samuel Johnson wrote in the 1755 Preface to his "Dictionary of the English Language"; "to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride."

I tell myself that the passing of Appalachian vernacular from my family's vocabulary is not a tragedy, or a sign of our being assimilated into a dominant culture, but simply the arrival of an inevitable end. "Tongues, like governments," Dr. Johnson wrote, "have a natural tendency to degeneration." I tell myself that it is a natural progression for my children to speak a language significantly different from that of my ancestors, but the fact that it has happened so suddenly, within the span of a single generation—my generation—makes me wonder if I have done something wrong, if I have failed the people who passed those words down. Sometimes the truest answer to the question "Who are you?" is "I don't know."

Words and blood are the double helix that connect us to our past. As a member of a transitional generation, I am losing those words and the connection they make. I am losing the small comfort of shared history. I compensate, in the stories I write, by sending people up mountains to look, as Horace Kephart did, for the answers to their questions, to look down from a high place and see what they can see. My characters, at least, can still say the words that bind them to the past without sounding queer, strange, eccentric, odd, unusual, unconventional, or suspicious. "Stories," says the writer Tim O'Brien, "can save us." I have put my faith in the idea that words, even new ones, possess that kind of redemptive power. Writers write about a place not because they belong there, but because they want to belong. It's a quare feeling. ♦

THE LITERARY LIFE

[*From the New York Post*]

New York *Times* reporter Lena Williams, who wrote a much-talked about story last December about the small, everyday annoyances that bother the races, has been sold as a book.

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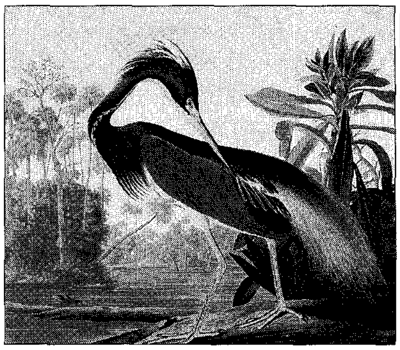

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MEDICAL DISPATCH

THE PAIN PERPLEX

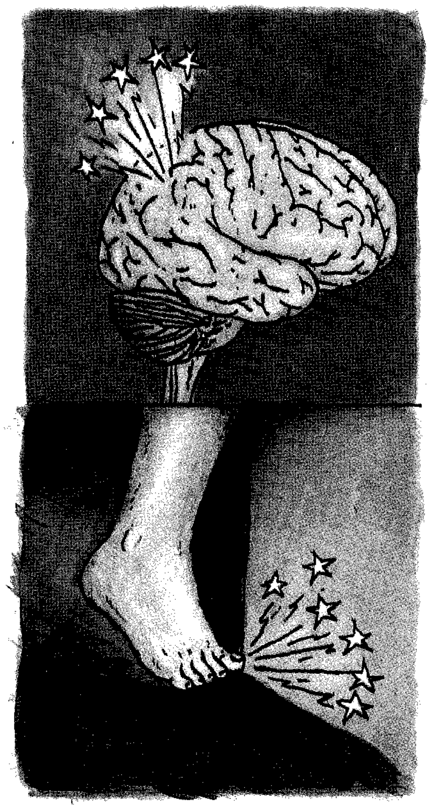
In the long search for the origin of pain, a new theory has emerged that might explain one of medicine's greatest mysteries.

BY ATUL GAWANDE

EVERY pain has a story, and the story of Rowland Scott Quinlan's goes back to an accident that happened ten years ago, when he was fifty-six. A Boston architect with a shock of white hair and a predilection for bow ties and Dutch cigarillos, Quinlan headed a thriving Beacon Street firm in his name, and had designed such buildings as the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Then, in March of 1988, he fell off a plank at the construction site of another of his commissions—a pavilion at the Franklin Park Zoo. His back was fine, but he dislocated and fractured his left shoulder, and it required several operations. In the fall, he returned to his drafting table, and there he was hit by a spasm of pain like a writhing snake in his back. The attacks recurred, and although at first he tried to ignore them, they soon became unbearable. More than once, while he was standing with a client the back pain suddenly burst forth and it was all he could do to keep from crying out while the client caught him and helped him to a seat or to the floor. Sitting in a restaurant with a colleague, he was overcome by pain so severe that he vomited right there at the table. Soon he wasn't able to work more than two or three hours a day, and he had to give up the firm to his partners.

Quinlan's orthopedist had some X-rays taken. They revealed little—perhaps a bit of arthritis, but nothing out of the ordinary. So Quinlan was sent to a pain specialist, who injected a long-needle syringe full of steroids and local anesthetic into his spine. The first few of these epidural injections worked for days, sometimes weeks, but subsequent shots provided steadily diminishing relief, until they didn't work at all.

Quinlan has been a patient at the Brigham and Women's Hospital, in Boston, where I work, and I had seen his most recent C.T. scan along with a sheaf of other tests and medical images. Nothing in them would have led me to expect the severity of his back pain: there was no fracture, no tumor, no infection, not even a sign of arthritic inflammation. The vertebrae were aligned perfectly, like checkers in a stack. None of the soft gel-like disks that sit like cushions between the vertebrae had ruptured. In the lower back, the so-called lumbar spine, two disks bulged a bit, but that is common in men of his age, and the bulges didn't seem to be pressing against any nerves. Even a surgical resident like me could see that there was no cause for operating on this back. When doctors encounter a patient who has chronic pain without physical findings to explain it—and such patients are exceedingly common—we tend to be dismissive. It's all in the head, we're apt to conclude: not a physical pain but a different, somehow less real, "mental" pain. In fact, Quinlan's orthopedist recommended that he see a psychiatrist as well as a physical therapist.



When I visited Quinlan at his home, in the seaside village of Newburyport, Massachusetts, I found him at what turned out to be his usual perch: a worktable in the kitchen facing a wall-length window with a view of a small garden. Blueprints of unfinished projects were curled up in rolls on the table. A telephone headset lay to one side. A dozen different kinds of drawing pens, along with small rulers and a protractor, sat in a holder. He grimaced as he rose to greet me. I thought about his thorough medical workup and those clean images of his spine: Was he faking it?

When I asked him, he smiled wanly, and told me he sometimes wondered that himself. "I've got it pretty cushy here," he said. Quinlan has handicap license plates, financial security, and none of the pressures of running a business, and if he doesn't want to do something he merely has to say his back is killing him. But, despite a patch on his arm that infuses high doses of the narcotic fentanyl through his skin twenty-four hours a day, he can't do even the simplest thing—stand in a line, walk up stairs, or even sleep more than four hours at a stretch—without the acute sensation that, as he puts it, "someone is wringing out a muscle in my back."

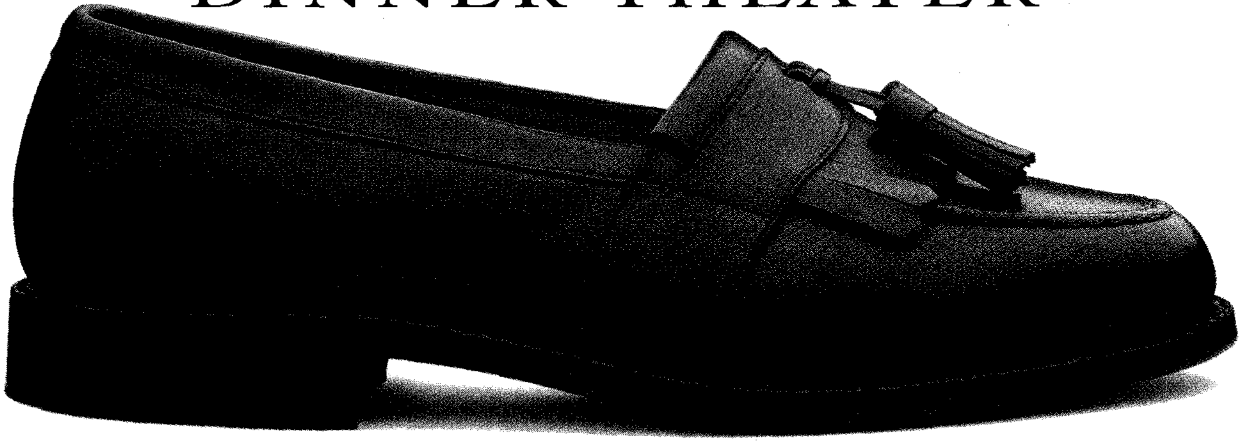
I asked his wife, Sue, who is a tall woman several years younger than he is, and has fine features and sad eyes, if she ever thought he fakes the pain. She told me that day in and day out for a decade now she has seen the pain and lived with the increasing limits it places on his life and hers. She has seen the pain defeat him in ways that she knows he is too proud to fake. He'll try to carry the groceries, and then, shamefaced, have to hand them back a few moments later. Though he loves movies, they have not been to the cinema in years. There have been times when the pain of movement has been so severe that he has soiled his pants rather than make his way to the bathroom.

Yet there are aspects of the pain that puzzle her, and make her wonder whether it is in some respects "in the head." She notices that when he is anxious or irritable, the pain is worse, and that when he is in a good mood or is simply distracted the pain can disap-

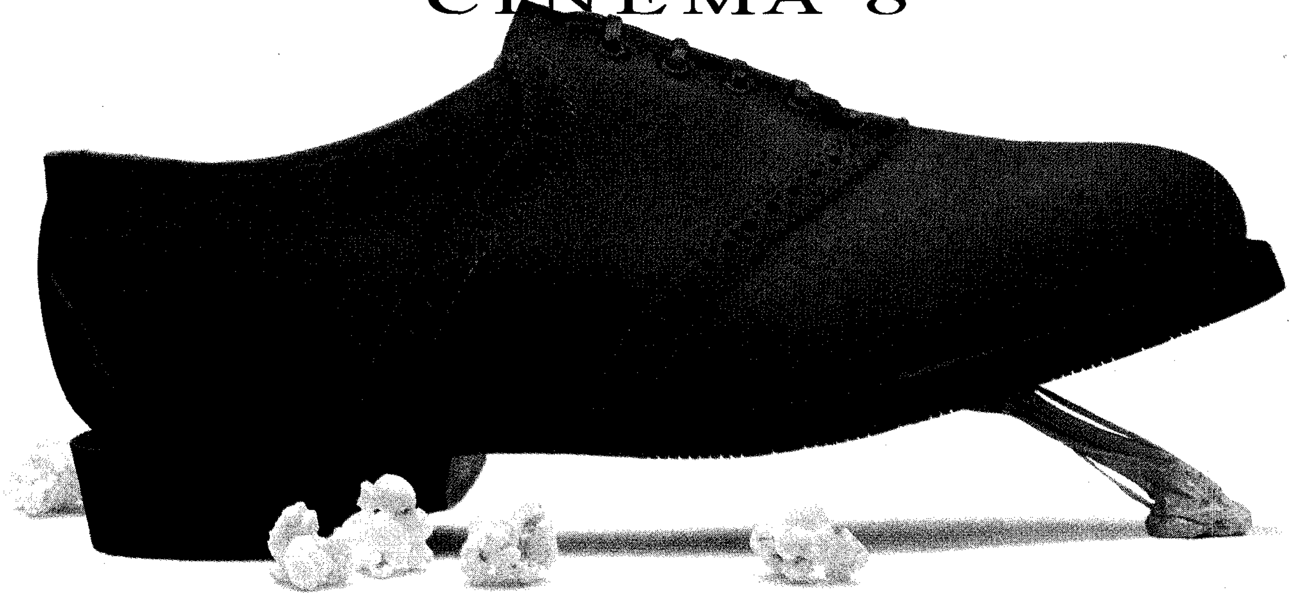
JONATHON ROSEN

OPERA HOUSE

DINNER THEATER



CINEMA 8



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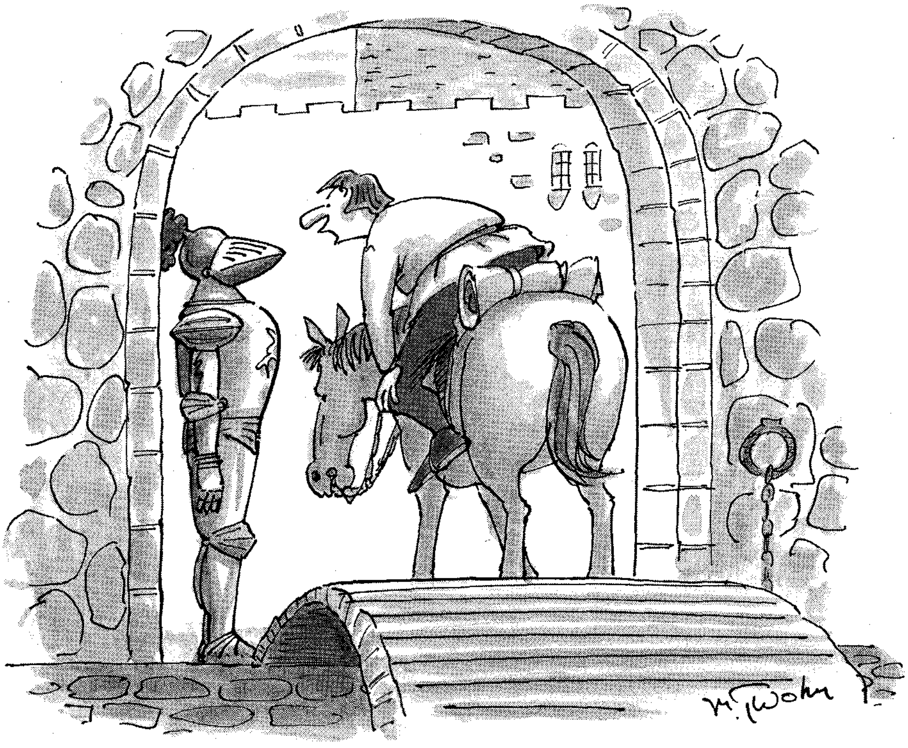
pear. He has bouts of depression which seem to bring on terrible spasms almost regardless of what he is doing physically. Like his physicians, she wonders how a pain can be so incapacitating yet arise from no identifiable physical abnormality. And what about the circumstances that tend to bring on an attack—a mood, a thought, sometimes nothing at all? These traits strike her as unusual, as needing explanation. But the disturbing truth is that Scott Quinlan isn't unusual. Among chronic pain sufferers, his case is altogether typical.

DR. EDGAR ROSS, a forty-four-year-old anesthesiologist, is the director of the chronic-pain treatment center at my hospital, where Quinlan is seen. Patients come to Dr. Ross with every imaginable kind of pain: back pain, neck pain, arthritic pain, total-body pain, neuropathic pain, AIDS-related pain, pelvic pain, chronic headaches, cancer pain, phantom-limb pain. Often, they have already seen numerous doctors and tried multiple therapies, including surgery, to no avail.

The center's waiting room looks like any other doctor's office. It has the flat blue carpet, the dated magazines, the row of expressionless patients sitting silently against the wall. A glass case displays recent thank-you letters. But when I visited Dr. Ross recently I noticed that the letters were not quite the typical testimonials that doctors like to put up. These patients did not thank the doctors for a cure. They thanked the doctors merely for taking their pain seriously—for believing in it. The truth is that doctors like me are grateful to the pain specialists, too. Though we want to be neutral in our feelings toward patients, we'll admit among ourselves that chronic-pain patients are a source of frustration and annoyance: presenting a malady we can neither explain nor alleviate, they shake our claims to competence and authority. We're all too happy to have someone like Dr. Ross to take these patients off our hands.

Ross led me into his office. Soft-spoken and unhurried, he has a soothing demeanor that fits perfectly with his line of work. Quinlan's kind of problem, he told me, is the one he sees most frequently. Chronic back pain is now second only to the common cold as a cause of lost work time, and it accounts for some forty per cent of workers'-compensation payments. In fact, there is a veritable epidemic of back pain in this country today, and nobody can explain why. By convention, we think of it as a mechanical problem, the result of misplaced stress on the spine. We therefore have had some sixty years of workplace programs, and now there are even "back schools," which teach the "correct way to lift." Despite the fact that the number of people who engage in manual labor has steadily declined, however, more people have chronic back pain than have ever had it before.



"A large Coke and an order of fries."

The mechanical explanation is almost certainly wrong, Ross noted. It's true that lifting something the wrong way can cause a muscle pull or a slipped disk. But that sort of strain occurs in almost everyone at some time, and in most people it never becomes a persistent problem. Studies have looked for physical factors that can predict which acute back injuries will evolve into chronic back pain, but they haven't found any. For instance, doctors used to assume that damaged disks were associated with pain, but recent findings have not borne this out. Spinal M.R.I. scans show that most people *without* back pain have disk bulges. Conversely, a large percentage of patients with chronic back pain, like Quinlan, are found to have no structural lesion. And even among those with abnormalities there is no relation between the severity of the pain and the severity of the abnormalities.

If the condition of your back doesn't predict whether you'll get chronic back pain, what does? Well, it's the mundane stuff that neither doctors nor patients much like to consider. Studies point to such "inorganic" factors as loneliness, involvement in litigation, receipt of workers' compensation, and job dissatisfaction. Consider the epidemic of back pain in the medical profession itself. Disability insurers once saw doctors as ideal customers. Nothing stopped doctors from working—not years of stooping over operating tables, not arthritis, not even old age. Insurers used to try to outbid one another with cheap rates and generous benefits to attract their business. In the last few years, however, the number of doctors with disabling back or neck pain has risen dramatically. Needless to say, doctors aren't suddenly being required to carry heavy packages around. But one known risk factor has been identified: with the growing role of managed care, job satisfaction in the medical profession has plunged.

THE explanation of pain which has dominated much of medical history originated with René Descartes, more than three centuries ago. Descartes proposed that pain is a purely

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physical phenomenon—that tissue injury stimulates specific nerves that transmit an impulse to the brain, causing the mind to perceive pain. The phenomenon, he said, is like pulling on a rope to ring a bell in the brain. It is hard to overstate how ingrained this account has become. Twentieth-century research on pain has been devoted largely to the search for and discovery of pain-specific nerve fibres (now named A-delta and C fibres) and pathways. In everyday medicine, doctors see pain in Cartesian terms—as a physical process, a sign of tissue injury. We look for a ruptured disk, a fracture, an infection, or a tumor, and we try to fix what's wrong.

The limitations of this mechanistic explanation, however, have been apparent for some time. During the Second World War, for example, Lieutenant Colonel Henry K. Beecher conducted a classic study of men with serious battlefield injuries. In the Cartesian view, the degree of injury ought to determine the degree of pain, rather like a dial controlling volume. Yet fifty-eight per cent of the men—men with compound fractures, gunshot wounds, torn limbs—reported only slight pain or no pain at all. Just twenty-seven per cent of the men felt enough pain to request pain medication, although such wounds routinely require narcotics in civilians. Clearly, something that was going on in their minds—Beecher thought they were overjoyed to have escaped alive from the battlefield—counteracted the signals sent by their injuries. Pain was far more complex than a one-way transmission from injury to "ouch."

In 1965, the Canadian psychologist Ronald Melzack and the British physiologist Patrick Wall proposed that the Cartesian model be replaced with what they called the gate-control theory of pain. Melzack and Wall argued that before pain signals reach the brain they must first go through a gating mechanism in the spinal cord which could ratchet them up or down. In some cases, this hypothetical gate could simply stop pain impulses from getting to the brain. In fact, researchers soon identified a gate for pain in a portion of the spinal cord called the dorsal horn. The theory explained such ordinary puzzles as why rubbing a painful foot makes it feel better. (The rubbing sends signals to the dorsal horn which close the gate to nearby pain impulses.)

Melzack and Wall's most startling suggestion was that what controlled the gate was not just signals from sensory nerves but also emotions and other "output" from the brain. They were saying that pulling on the rope need not make the bell ring. The bell itself—the mind—could stop it. Their theory prompted a great deal of research into how factors such as mood, gender, and beliefs influence the experience of pain. In one study, for example, researchers measured pain threshold and tolerance levels in fifty-two dancers from a British ballet company and fifty-three university students using a standard method called the cold-pressor test. The test is ingeniously simple. (I tried it at home myself.) After immersing your hand in body-temperature water for two minutes, to establish a baseline condition, you dunk your hand in a bowl of ice

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ISLAND IN THE CHARLES

By being scholar first of that new night.
—*Richard Crashaw*

Taking the well-worn path in the mind though dusk encroaches
upon the mind, taking back alleys careful step by step
past parked cars and trash containers, three blocks to the concrete ramp
of the footbridge spanning the highway with its rivering, four-lane
unstaunchable traffic, treading on shadow and slant broken light,

my mother finds her way. By beer bottles, over smeared
Trojans, across leaf muck, she follows the track, clutching her
jacket close. The footbridge lofts her over the flashing cars
and sets her down, gently, among trees, where she is a child
in the weave of boughs, and leaf shapes plait the breeze.

She fingers silver-green blades of the crack willow, she tests dark grooves
of crack-willow bark. The tree has a secret. Its branches pour
themselves back toward earth, and my mother pauses, dredging a breath
up out of her sluggish lungs. The blade leaves scratch
her fingertips, the corrugated bark

releases a privacy darker than cataract veils.
But slashed and ribboned, glimpsed through fronds,
the river hauls its cargo of argent light
and she advances, past basswood and crab-apple clumps
along the tarmac where cyclists, joggers, rollerbladers

entranced in their varying orbits swoop
around her progress. With method, she reaches her bench,
she stations there. She sits columnular, fastened
to her difficult breath, and faces the river in late afternoon.
Behind her, voices. Before her, the current casts its glimmering

seine to a shore so distant no boundary scars
her retina, and only occasional sculls or sailboats flick
across her vision as quickened, condensing light.
There she sits, poised, while the fluent transitive Charles
draws off to the harbor and, farther, to the unseen sea

until evening settles, and takes her in its arms.

—ROSANNA WARREN

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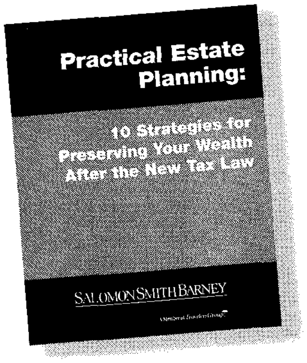
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water and start a clock running. You mark the time when it begins to hurt: that is your pain threshold. Then you mark the time when it hurts too much to keep your hand in the water: that is your pain tolerance. The test is always stopped at a hundred and twenty seconds, to prevent injury.

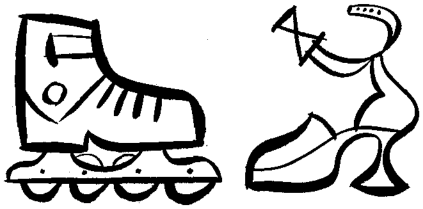
The results were striking. On the average, female students reported pain at sixteen seconds and pulled their hands out of the ice water at thirty-seven seconds. Female dancers went almost three times as long on both counts. Men in both groups had a higher threshold and tolerance for pain—as expected, since studies show women to be more sensitive than men to pain, except during the last few weeks of pregnancy—but the difference between male dancers and male nondancers was nearly as large. What explains the difference? Probably it has something to do with the psychology of ballet dancers—a group distinguished by self-discipline, physical fitness, and competitiveness, as well as by a high rate of chronic injury. Their driven personalities and competitive culture evidently inure them to pain: that's why they are able to perform through sprains and stress fractures, and why half of all dancers develop long-term injuries. (Similar to other nondancing males, I started to feel pain at around twenty-five seconds; but I had no trouble keeping my hand in for the whole hundred and twenty seconds. I will let others speculate on what this says about the submissiveness inculcated in surgical residents.)

Other studies along these lines have shown that extroverts have greater pain tolerance than introverts, that drug abusers have low pain tolerance and thresholds, and that, with training, one can diminish one's sensitivity to pain. There is also striking evidence that very simple kinds of mental suggestion can have powerful effects on pain. In one study of five hundred patients undergoing dental procedures, those who were given a placebo injection and reassured that it would relieve their pain had the least discomfort—not only less than the patients who got a placebo and were told nothing but also less than the patients who got a real anesthetic without any reassuring comment that it would work. Today, it is abundantly evident that the brain is actively involved in the experience of pain, and is no mere bell on a string. Today, every medical textbook teaches the gate-control theory as fact. There's a problem with it, though. It doesn't explain people like Scott Quinlan.

Gate-control theory accepts Descartes's view that what you feel as pain is a signal from tissue injury transmitted by nerves to the brain, and it adds the notion that the brain controls a gateway for such an injury signal. But in the case of Quinlan's chronic back pain where is the injury? Or take something like phantom-limb pain. After amputation of a limb, most people suffer a period of constant, intractable burning or cramping that feels exactly as if the limb were still there. Without a limb, however, there are no nerve impulses for the gate to control. So where does the pain come from? The rope and the clapper are gone, but the bell can still ring.

ONE spring day in 1994, Dr. Frederick Lenz, a neurosurgeon at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, brought to his operating table a patient suffering from severe hand tremors. The patient, whom I'll call Mark Taylor, was only thirty-six, but over the years his hands had come to shake so violently that the simplest of tasks—writing, buttoning his shirt, drinking from a glass, or typing on his keyboard at his job as a purchasing agent—grew absurdly difficult. Medications failed, and he lost jobs more than once because of his difficulties. Desperate for a return to a normal life, he agreed to a delicate procedure: brain surgery that would destroy cells in a small structure called the thalamus, which was already known to contribute to such excessive stimulation of the hands.

Taylor had another big problem, though: for seventeen years, he had struggled with a panic disorder. At least once a week, while he was working at his terminal or at home in the kitchen feeding a child, he would suddenly be overcome by severe chest pains, as if he were having a heart attack. His heart would pound, his ears would ring; he would grow short of breath and would have an overwhelming urge to escape. Nevertheless, a psychologist whom Lenz consulted assured him that the disorder was unlikely to hinder the operation.



Initially, Lenz says, everything went as he had expected. He injected a local anesthetic—the operation is done with the patient awake—and burred a small opening in the top of Taylor's skull. Then he cautiously inserted a long, thin electrical probe deep inside, right down into the thalamus. Lenz talked to Taylor the whole time, asking him to stick out his tongue, to move a hand, to do any of a dozen other tasks that showed he was all right. The danger in this type of surgery is that it might destroy the wrong cells: the thalamic cells involved in tremor lay just fractions of a millimetre away from cells that are essential for sensation and motor activity. So before cauterizing with a second, larger probe, the surgeon had to find the right cells by stimulating them with a gentle electric pulse. The probe was in a portion of Taylor's thalamus which Lenz labelled Site 19, and he zapped it with low voltage. He had been here a thousand times before, and typically, he told me, the site produces a prickle in the forearm. Sure enough, this is what Taylor felt. Lenz then zapped an adjacent area he labelled Site 23, where stimulation generally produces a rather ordinary sensation in the chest, usually a mild tingling. But this time Taylor cried out. It was, he said, his all too familiar chest pain, and with it came a mounting sense of suffocation and fear—all the symptoms of his panic attacks. Lenz stopped the stimulation. The pain disappeared, and Taylor immediately calmed down. Lenz zapped Site 23 again, producing exactly the same effect. He apologized for the discomfort and moved on until he found the cells controlling Taylor's tremor and cauterized them: the operation was, in fact, a success.

Yet, even as Lenz completed the procedure, his mind was racing. Only once before had he seen anything like this effect. It was in a sixty-nine-year-old diabetic woman, with a long history of anginal pain that came on with exertion. While Lenz was performing a similar operation on her, he found that stimulating much the same microscopic section of her brain brought on her familiar chest pain, just as it did with Taylor: this was a sensation she described as "deep, frightful, squeezing." The implications might have easily been lost, but Lenz was known for his research on pain and realized that he had witnessed an astonishing effect. As he later noted in the journal *Nature Medicine*, the response in these two patients was wildly out of proportion to the stimulus. What in most people produces no more than a tingle was torture to them. Lenz saw that areas of the brain governing ordinary sensations could become abnormally sensitized—set to fire in response to perfectly harmless stimuli. In the woman's case, it seemed that the nerve input from her diseased heart had done it to her. In Taylor's case, by contrast, the pain was associated not with any bodily damage but with his panic disorder, his abnormal psychology. Lenz's findings suggest that *all* pain is "in the head"—and that sometimes, as in the cases of Scott Quinlan and Mark Taylor, a physical injury isn't needed to make a pain system go haywire.

"Please listen carefully to the available options."

This is the newest theory of pain. Its leading proponent is, once again, Melzack, who abandoned gate-control theory in the late nineteen-eighties and began telling incredulous audiences to revise their understanding of pain once again. Given the evidence, he now says, we should stop thinking that pain or any other sensation is a signal passively "felt" in the brain. Yes, injury produces nerve signals that travel through a spinal-cord gate, but it is the brain that generates the pain experience, and it can do so even in the absence of external stimuli. If a mad scientist reduced you to nothing but a brain in a jar, Melzack says, you could still feel pain—indeed, you'd have the full range of sensory experience.

According to the new theory, pain and other sensations are conceived as "neuromodules" in the brain—something akin to individual computer programs on a hard drive, or to tracks on a compact disk. When you feel pain, it's your brain running a neuromodule that produces the pain experience, as if someone pressed the "play" button on a CD player. And a great many things can press the button. The way Melzack explains it, a pain neuromodule is not a discrete anatomical entity but a network, linking components from virtually every region of the brain. Input is gathered from sensory nerves, memory, mood, and other centers, like members of some committee in charge of whether the music will play. If the signals reach a certain threshold, they trigger the neuromodule. And then what plays is no one-note melody. Pain is a symphony—a complex response that includes not just a distinct sensation but also motor activity, a change in emotion, a focussing of attention, a brand-new memory.

Suddenly, a simple toe-stubbing no longer seems so simple. In this view, the signal from the toe still has to make it through the spinal-cord gate, but thereafter it joins a lot of other signals in the brain—distractions, memories, anticipation, mood. They generally combine to activate a toe-pain neuromodule. In some people, however, the physical stimulus is cancelled out, and the stubbed toe is hardly noticed. There's nothing surprising here so far. But now we can imagine—and this is the most radical implication of Melzack's ideas—that the same neuromodule can go off, generating genuine toe pain, without a toe's having been stubbed. The neuromodule could—like Site 23 in Mark Taylor's brain—become primed like a hair trigger. Then virtually anything could set it off: a mere touch, fear, frustration, or simply a memory.

"Inorganic" factors don't dictate inorganic solutions, to be sure, and the new theories have helped give direction to the pharmacology of pain. For pharmacologists, the Holy Grail of chronic-pain treatment is a pill that would be more effective than morphine but lack its side effects, such as dependence, sedation, and motor impairment. If an overactive neuronal system is the problem, then what one needs is a drug that will damp it down. That's why, in what a decade ago might have seemed a strange development, pain specialists increasingly prescribe anti-epileptic drugs, like carbamazepine and gabapentin, for their most difficult-to-treat patients. After all, that's what these drugs do: they tune brain cells to modulate their excitability. So far, these kinds of drugs work only for some people—Quinlan has been on gabapentin for more than six months without much effect—but drug companies are hard at work on a new generation of similar "neurostabilizing" compounds.

For example, Neurex, a small Silicon Valley biotechnology company, recently designed a pain drug from the venom of the Conus sea snail. Venoms are, needless to say, biologically potent, and, unlike most of the proteins from nature that scientists have tried to use as drugs, they evade the body's mechanisms for breaking proteins down. The trick is to tame the venom, to modify it so it is medically useful. The Conus venom was known to kill by blocking specific pathways in the brain which are necessary in order for neurons to fire. With a few alterations, however, Neurex scientists created Ziconotide, a drug that only slightly inhibits those pathways. Instead of shutting brain cells down, it seems just to mute their excitability. In initial clinical trials, Ziconotide effectively controlled chronic pain from cancer and from AIDS. Another new-generation analgesic in development is Abbott Laboratories' ABT-594, a compound related to a poison secreted by an Ecuadorian frog, *Epibpedobates tricolor*. In animal experiments that were published in the journal *Science* in January, ABT-594 proved to be as much as seventy times as potent as morphine in relieving pain. Companies have other pain drugs in the pipeline, too, including a class of drugs known as NMDA antagonists, which also work by reducing neuronal excitability. One of these could turn out to be the painkiller that Quinlan and patients like him are looking for.

AT best, however, these drugs represent only a halfway solution. The fundamental problem for research is how to stop the pain system in such patients from going haywire in the first place. The stories that people tell of their chronic pain typically start with an initial injury. So, historically, we have tried to prevent chronic pain by preventing acute strains. A whole ergonomics industry has developed around this idea. Yet the lesson from Ross's pain clinic and Lenz's operating table is that the antecedents of pain lie elsewhere than in the muscle and bone of patients. In fact, some forms of chronic pain behave astonishingly like social epidemics.

In Australia, during the early nineteen-eighties, workers—particularly keyboard operators—experienced a sudden outbreak of disabling arm pain, which doctors labelled "repetition strain injury," or R.S.I. This was not a mild case of writer's cramp but a matter of severe pain, which started with minor discomfort during typing or other repetitive work and progressed to invalidism. The average time that a sufferer lost from work was seventy-four days. As with chronic back pain, no consistent physical abnormalities or effective treatment could be found, yet the arm pain spread like a contagion. It had hardly existed before 1981, but by its peak, in 1985, enormous numbers of workers were affected. In two Australian states, R.S.I. disabled as much as thirty per cent of the workforce in some industries; at the same time there were pockets of workers who were almost entirely unaffected. Clusters appeared even within a single organization. At Telecom Australia, for example, the incidence of R.S.I. among telephone operators in a single city varied widely between departments. Nor could investigators find any connection between R.S.I. and the physical circumstances of the workers—the actual repetitiveness of their jobs or the ergonomics of their equipment. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the epidemic crashed. By 1987, it was essentially over. Now some Australian researchers complain that they can't find enough R.S.I. patients to study.

Chronic back pain has been with us for so long that it is hard conceptually—and even politically—to step back and recognize its social etiology, let alone figure out how cultural factors make an individual's pain system go awry. The Australian pain epidemic demonstrates the power of those factors to cause genuine, disabling pain on a national scale, and yet our knowledge of these causes and how to control them is meagre. We know from a variety of studies that social-support networks—a happy marriage and satisfying employment, say—protect against disabling back pain. We know, statistically speaking, that being given certain diagnostic labels and being provided disability pay (and thus a kind of official recognition and validation) can perpetuate chronic pain. In Australia, for example, many researchers believe that two major factors that sparked the epidemic were the coining of R.S.I. as a diagnostic label and early action by the government to insure compensation for the syndrome as a work-related disability. When the diagnosis fell out of favor with physicians, and disability coverage became harder to get, the incidence of the disorder plummeted. It also appeared that initial publicity about the possible portents of arm pain and concerted campaigns in some places to increase the reporting of arm pains or to institute ergonomic changes only contributed to the epidemic. More recently, in the United States a debate has erupted over the origins of a similar workplace epidemic, called, variously, repetitive-stress injury, repetitive-motion disorder, and—in the currently favored nomenclature—cumulative-trauma disorder. Once again, the salient risk factors seem to be social rather than physical.

Back and arm pain are not unique in having nonphysical causes. Studies have shown that social conditions play a dominant role in many chronic-pain syndromes, including chronic pelvic pain, temporomandibular-joint disorder, and chronic tension headache, to name just a few. Again, none of this should be taken to mean that people are faking it. As Melzack's account suggests, pain that doesn't arise from physical injury is no less real than pain that does. And so a compassionate approach toward chronic pain means investigating its social coördinates, not just its physical ones. For the solution to chronic pain may lie more in what goes on around us than in what is going on inside us. Of all the implications of the new theory of pain, this one seems to be the oddest and the most far-reaching: it has made pain political. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

[*From the Scituate* (*Mass.*) *Mariner*]

Wednesday, May 27. 5:44 P.M. Glades and Minot store, suspicious activity. Man punched side of car, swore at opera.

If our Attaches could talk, what stories they would tell.

"Once, I carried concrete paving blocks."

– Attache of Terry C. Plauché,
Landscape Architect,
Mobile, Alabama

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Terry Plauché, the landscape architect, for example. He had to show a client samples of concrete paving blocks. But they weighed 30 pounds: they tore right through a canvas book bag.

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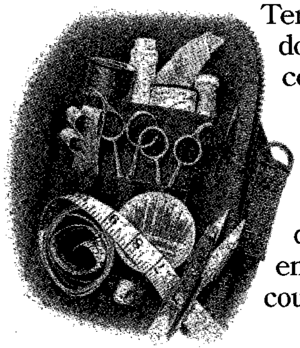
"I'm sure the attache could have carried *twice* the weight," Terry says, "but I doubt my arms could have lasted."

Then, there's Leah Witzig, the quilter, who travels to quilting conferences around the country. She likes all our pockets and dividers. She stuffs them with fabrics, scissors, spools of thread, even her lunch.



"Leah keeps me in stitches."

– Attache of Leah Witzig, Quiltmaker,
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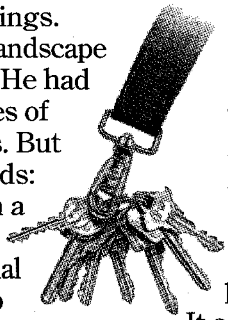

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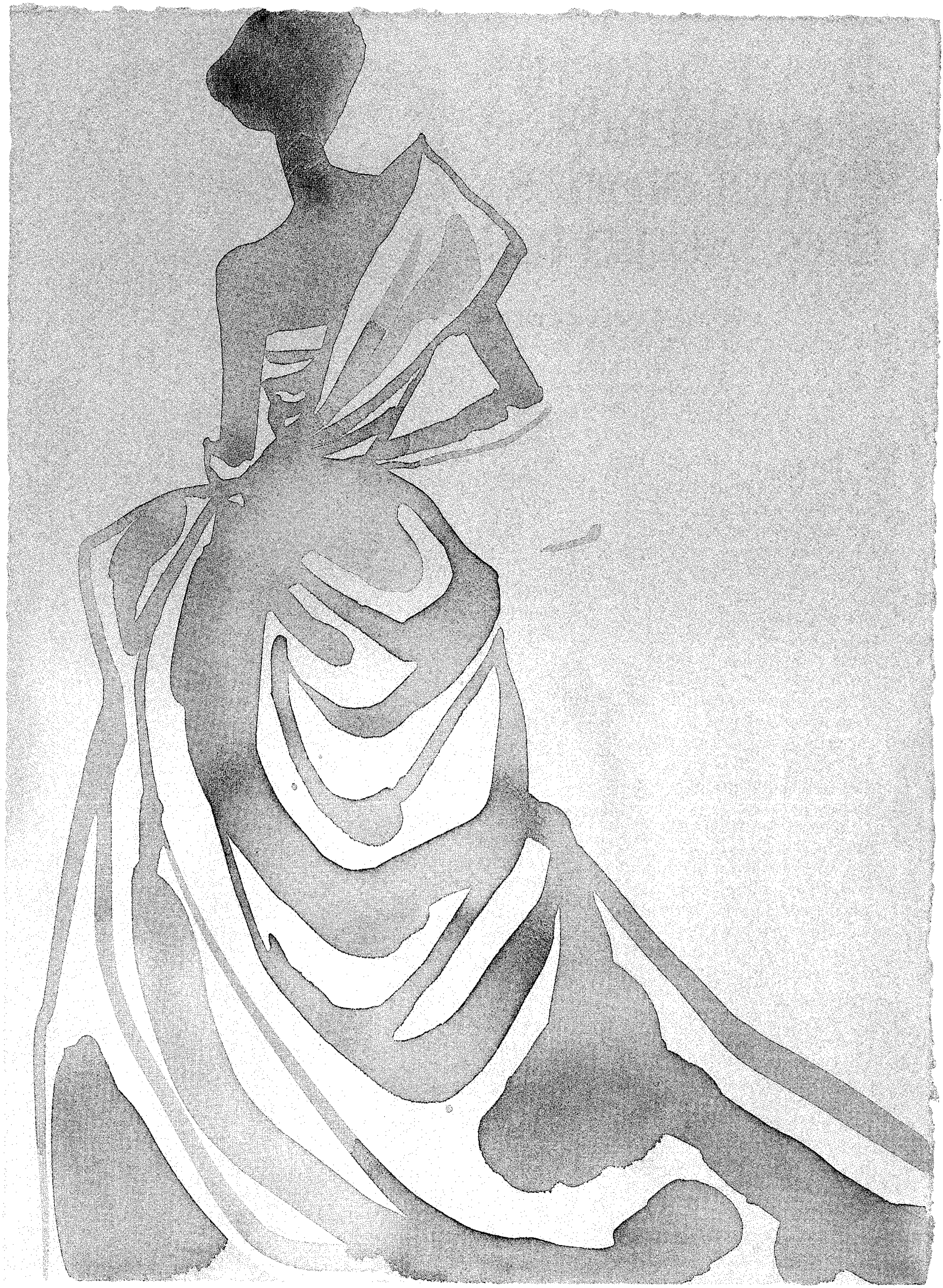


ANNALS OF FASHION

THE INSIDER'S OUTSIDER

How did the legendary designer Charles James, who counted among his clients Whitneys, Hearsts, and Paleys, come to see himself as a victim of fashion?

BY HILTON ALS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATS GUSTAFSON

A characteristically asymmetrical ball gown (opposite), and the designer in his New York salon in 1947. Photograph by Jerry Cooke.

IN 1948, *Vogue* hired Cecil Beaton to photograph an assemblage of evening dresses by his childhood friend the iconoclastic designer Charles James. It is the most well-known image of James's work, and one of the most famous fashion photographs ever taken. Eight women in evening gowns made of faille, velvet, and satin are grouped in an elegant salon, drinking coffee from delicate demitasse cups. (Their male counterparts are presumably in the library, smoking after-dinner cigars.) It is an image of fairy-tale opulence, and the self-conscious artificiality of Beaton's models cleverly echoes the studied artificiality of James's clothes. The gowns are apricot, pearl-gray, champagne-pink, ice-blue, a deep, rich brown—not colors one generally associates with clothing produced at the start of the Cold War. Tall mirrors reflect the salon's ornate moldings and its large crystal chandelier; yards of fabric spill into light-catching puddles on the carpeted floor.

Beaton's photograph is included in Elizabeth Ann Coleman's book "The Genius of Charles James," which was published in conjunction with a retrospective of James's work that Coleman curated at the Brooklyn Museum, in 1982. Also included in Coleman's book is a photograph taken in the late nineteen-sixties, by Bill Cunningham, the well-known street photographer. By this time, James was living in a room in the Chelsea Hotel, amid stacks of drawings yellowing with age and newspaper clippings documenting his life and work. Terrified that his legacy would be lost, he was staging late-night modelling sessions so that Antonio Lopez, a young illustrator, could make a record of his creations. In Cunningham's photograph, the dress being modelled is an evening gown of black crêpe, the mirror in the background reveals an empty light socket in the ceiling, and the model is a wistful Hispanic boy. "At 2:00 a.m. during one of the drawing sessions, Charles became exasperated by the female model's hips and buttocks, which bulged and distorted the line of a slender black 1929 gown," Cunningham wrote later, in an essay for Coleman's book. "Antonio quietly left the studio on the pretext of going for coffee. He returned with a handsome, straw-thin young man whose body fit perfectly into the sinuous gown—and the drawing session went on at an inspired pace."

When the Beaton picture was taken, James was at the height of his success. In 1949, Lois Long, *The New Yorker's* first fashion critic, wrote of James in *Town & Country:* "Fashion greats in this country will whisper to you—off the record, of course—that he is the best, if not the only, genuine dressmaking talent both native to and resident in the United States. Many think he leads the world." When the Cunningham photograph was taken, James had only one loyal couture client left: the jewelry designer Elsa Peretti. And yet despite the very real stylistic and material differences between these two pictures—James high and low, as it were—they are two halves of the same whole; they represent a career that had everything to do with a relentless quest for technical and aesthetic perfection, and almost nothing to do with the market realities of the fashion world in mid-twentieth-century America.

Charles James was perhaps the only couturier that America has ever produced, and his clients included everyone from Lady Ottoline Morrell and Marlene Dietrich to Babe Paley and Dominique de Menil. His contemporaries in the fashion world considered him a genius (Dior credited him with inspiring his own New Look), and he has a following among designers today. ("If I met Charles James I'd pass out at his feet," the designer Azzedine Alaïa told Joe McKenna, in *Interview*.) But whether James was fitting a rich client or making a haute-couture model out of a street kid, it was the dress that mattered, and he was constantly reappraising what he called his "inventory of invention": the evening gowns, day suits, cocktail dresses, coats, and capes that he designed and redesigned in the course of a fifty-year career. James thought of himself as both a creative artist and a scientific inventor, and he sacrificed family, friends, clients, and his own well-being to this vision of himself and his work. And yet despite these sacrifices—or perhaps because of them—only twenty years after his death most Americans have never heard of him.

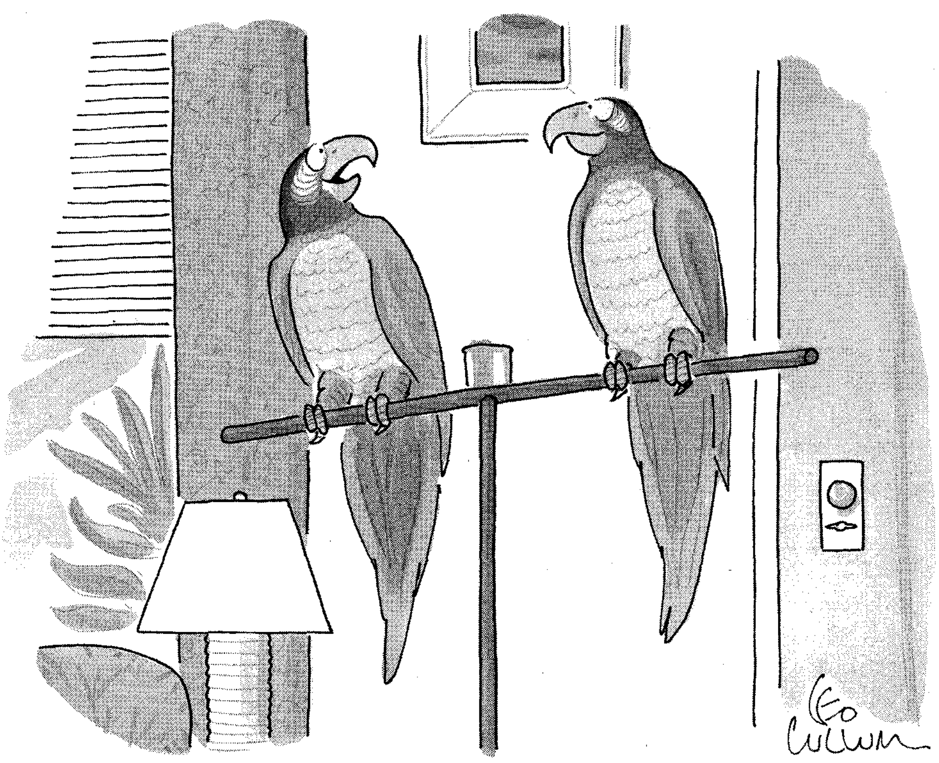
CHARLES WILSON BREGA JAMES was born in Surrey, England, on July 18, 1906. He was the middle child and only son of Ralph Ernest Haweis James and Louise Brega James. "Charlie's father was anti-Semitic, and his mother was vaguely Jewish, and he was the result of that," the painter Harold Stevenson, a close friend of James's, says. "The most illogical combination, even in the Edwardian period." His parents had met on an ocean liner, sailing to England. Louise Brega, "a reigning belle of Chicago," was travelling around the world; Ralph James, an instructor at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, was escorting a battalion on its way back from China to attend the coronation of Edward VII.

James's mother was interested in couture—her wedding dress was from Worth—and her son's all-consuming passion appears to have been in part inspired by her. According to Stevenson, James never got over the romantic image of his mother and other female relatives emerging from their Edwardian dressing rooms swathed in tulle and chiffon and silk, their waists cinched by whalebone, their bodices laden with the fringe and drapery considered fashionable at the time. In her valuable study "Fashion and Eroticism," Valerie Steele points out that rich Edwardian women dressed with the aims of enhancing their natural attributes, concealing their defects, and signalling their social status, and those tenets remained central for James. Conversely, he was frequently vitriolic about other people's look and carriage, and was ultimately dissatisfied by the limitations of human bodies, especially those of women.

"He was brilliant—he figured everything out before anyone else and wasn't tolerant of other people," the costume designer William Ivey Long told me. "Poor thing, he was probably bored the minute he began to walk and talk." A family friend remembered the young James as an "obnoxious little boy." Yet he was not a dilettante; he had reserves of discipline, especially for music. At home, James had a troubled relationship with his father; it was clear early on that he was not only gay but flamboyantly so, and entirely uninterested in the military. (James used to make fun of the inordinate attention that his father paid to the style and cut of his military vests, intimating that he, too, was a homosexual aesthete.)

At Harrow, which he began attending when he was fourteen, James was exposed to a distinctly English dandyism in line with his own. It was there that he met Francis Rose, the future painter; Cecil Beaton, with whom he had a brief schoolboy affair; and Evelyn Waugh. (In 1924, Waugh noted in his diary, "On Friday I took tea *en famille* with Charles James and found him restless, his sisters noisy, and his father's butler in pince-nez.") Rebelling against their parents' sense of honor, home, and heterosexuality, James and Beaton found other ways of defining themselves. Beaton once vetoed his roommate's request to paint their room pink on the ground that it would clash with his roommate's coloring. James painted, composed, and wrote, and even published a book of his own poems, illustrated with his own woodcuts. Already, his moral barometer was responsive to the aesthetic of appearances—the shape of a sentence, pleasing figures on a canvas, the assiduous cultivation of beauty, languor, and sarcasm.

After only three terms, James was expelled from Harrow for a "sexual escapade." His parents made a couple of attempts to continue his formal education but finally gave up. Then, in 1922, Samuel Insull, a utilities magnate in Chicago and an old family friend, came to visit the Jameses in England, and offered Charles a job as an administrative assistant. "He was sent on to Chicago, all equipped with an elegant, Edwardian wardrobe, to settle down in the Edison company," Lois Long writes. "His stay there was short but, we are told, memorable.... He was a nonconformist about business hours and



"I've never written anything, but I think I have a good ear for dialogue."

all electricity except that generated by himself bored him.” In his spare time, James painted silk scarves and batiks, which he would then persuade his female co-workers to model. On the verge of being fired and shipped home, James decided instead to go into fashion. “To punish his father, he became a hat designer in Chicago,” the designer Miguel Ferreras recalls.

In 1924, when James was eighteen, he established his first hat business, with a milliner who had formerly worked for his family as a nurse. He assumed a friend’s name, Charles Boucheron, for professional use—an alias intended to spare his family further embarrassment—and quickly set about establishing himself as an artisan of startling originality. Rather than producing hats and displaying them, ready-made, on hatstands, he cut and shaped them on his customers’ heads—a preference for working directly with the body which would last throughout his career. His parents subsequently came to live in Chicago, and many of his first customers were friends and acquaintances of his mother’s. But neither she nor James’s sisters could be on his client list: Ralph James forbade it. (James’s family did not publicly acknowledge him as a designer until 1929, when his older sister was married and James designed the wedding dress and the bridesmaids’ outfits.)

In Chicago, Elizabeth Coleman writes, “James himself proved so outrageous that his name was removed from the ‘debutante list,’ relieving him of the duty of escorting budding socialites.” He also established a financial pattern that would vary little in the next fifty years: after founding a business, he would ignore its financial aspects, disappear when its demands became too great, borrow money, and manipulate patrons and clients into believing that he had been victimized at the crass hands of commerce.

In 1928, with money borrowed from a family friend, James left Chicago for New York. There he set up a workshop and sold his hats at Best & Co. to support himself. “He ran up and down the Southampton beach in beautiful robes, showing his millinery on his head,” Diana Vreeland recalled. Then, in the fall of 1929, he moved to London, where he would remain for the next ten years, selling hats to American department stores and taking frequent trips to Paris to learn more about fabric and cut.

In a 1933 letter to Vita Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf describes the young designer’s work on fashionable Ryder Street (his third address in London in four years): “I dined with Mary [Hutchinson] and she told me about Charlie James the man milliner who was dropped by Heaven into her hands. . . . Her new dress is like that cold dish at Fortnum’s all white with black.” The dress was “symmetrical, diabolical and geometrically perfect,” she went on. “So geometrical is Charlie James that if a stitch is crooked, Vita, the whole dress is torn to shreds, which Mary bears without wincing.”

As James became known for the audacity of his designs, he was also becoming known for the audacity of his personality. In “The Genius of Charles James,” Anne, Countess of Rosse, a regular client of James’s, writes, “I remember a very rich and charming American London hostess whom I took to see him; though he looked up, there was silence as we came in. ‘Charlie, I’ve brought my friend, Mrs. X., who so admires your beautiful clothes,’ I ventured. ‘What do you want?’ he asked her bluntly. . . . ‘I couldn’t possibly make anything for a frump like you. Why, you can’t even walk properly!’ ”

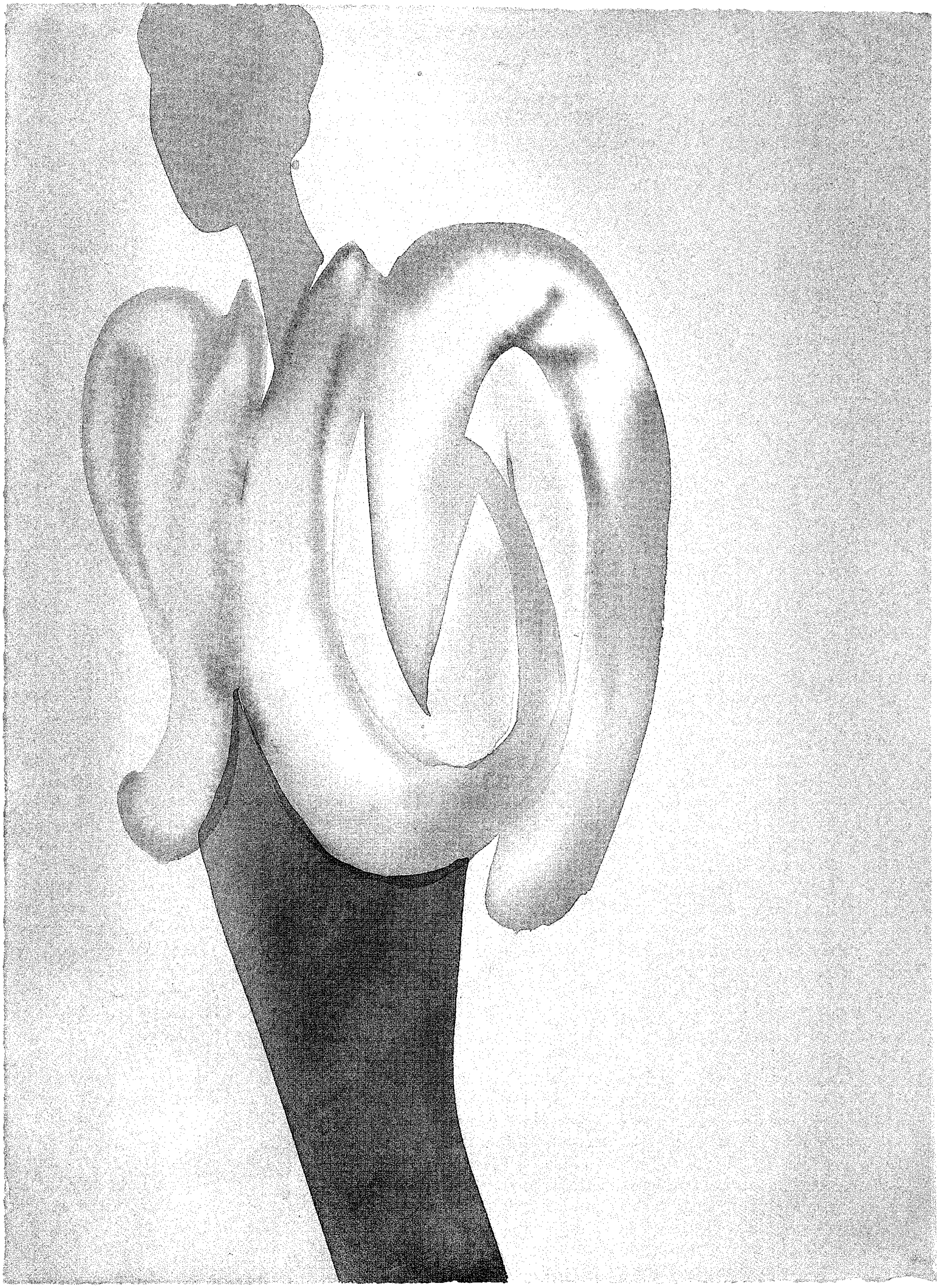
“I think he cultivated the image of the maverick, since it scared people into believing he was a ‘mad genius,’ ” Richard Martin, the curator of the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, told me. “I think he knew how to use that adversarial role to his advantage.”

During his years abroad, James gradually developed a design philosophy different from that of his contemporaries. While Coco Chanel, whom James admired, more or less glorified a woman’s natural shape by unleashing it from the constrictions imposed on it by corsets, picture hats, and high button shoes, James went Chanel one better by wrapping the body to enhance the new sleekness that accompanied the increasing athleticism of women in the nineteen-twenties and thirties. This can be seen in James’s remarkable “Taxi dress,” which he designed in 1929 and then largely abandoned for nearly forty years, until 1977, when he made one for Elsa Peretti. Cut on the bias and wrapped around the body one and a half times, the Taxi dress was made from one piece of fabric, which was fastened first with bracelet clasps and then, in later versions, with plastic zippers. A precursor of Diane Von Fürstenberg’s wrap dress, it was designed for the woman on the go who, before yet another social engagement, could change in a taxi, if necessary. The dress came in two sizes, Coleman tells us, “an early attempt by James to demonstrate that detailed sizing was not essential if a garment was designed correctly.”

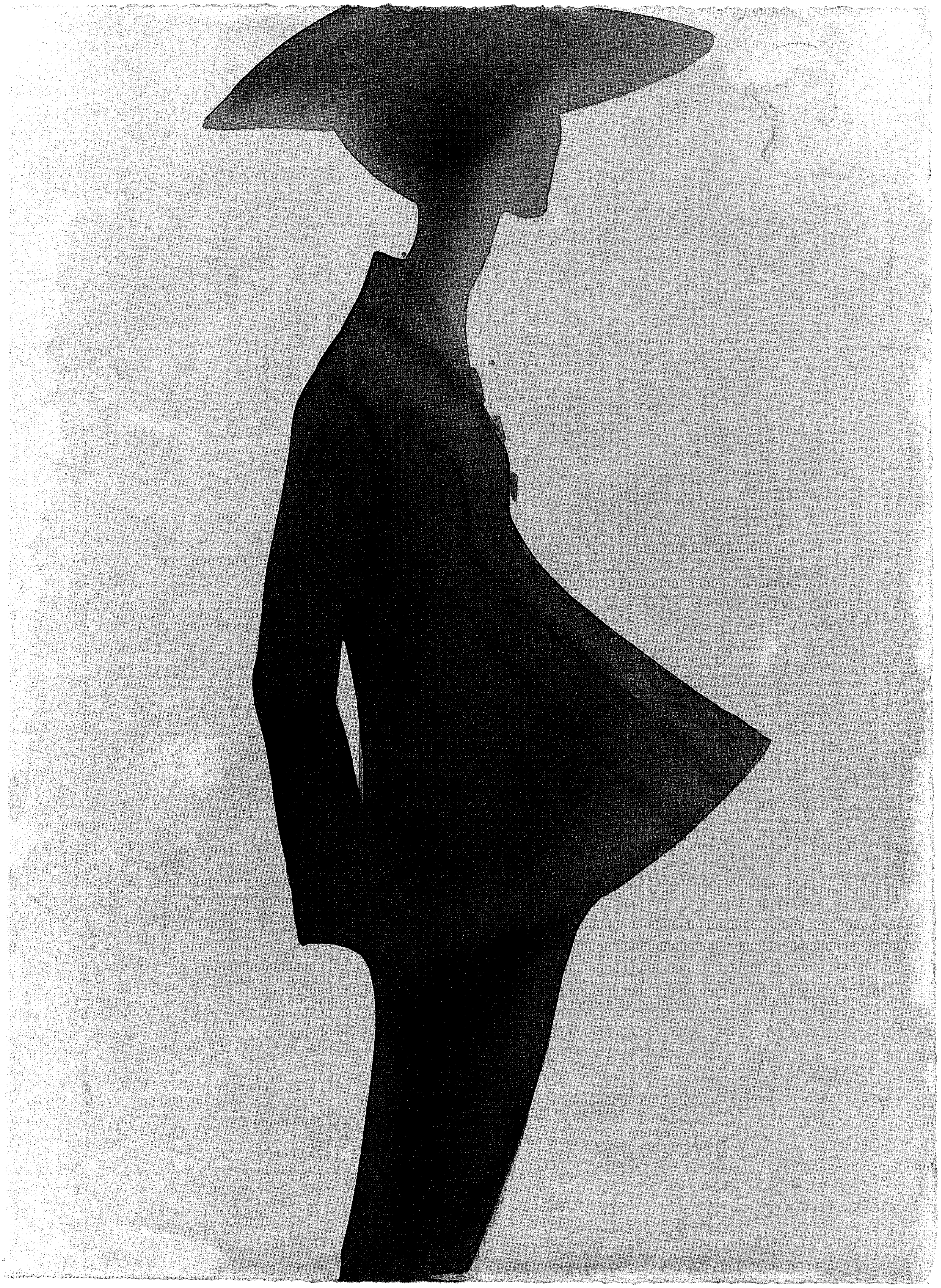
Richard Martin believes that the evening coats and capes that James started designing in the thirties were a continuation of the investigation he’d initiated with the Taxi dress. Made out of tapered panels of grosgrain—a fabric hitherto generally reserved for millinery—James’s outerwear in this period was “minimally constructed to sweep with a ribbony openness,” Martin writes in his monograph “Charles James,” which was published in England in 1997. But what set James apart from his contemporaries was his unwillingness to “yield entirely to the fluid principles of the 1930s,” Martin continues. “He alone insisted on keeping a dense, weighty core from which lines flowed.” In 1937, James designed his famous white quilted-and-padded satin eiderdown jacket (now owned by the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London), which Salvador Dali pronounced the first soft sculpture.

In Paris that same year, with funds provided by his mother, James staged one of his few shows. It was a resounding success. The clothes attracted the attention of the French designer Paul Poiret, who had come to prominence before the First World War by introducing the “Oriental” influence—harem pants, turbans, and the like. James recalled Poiret’s saying to him, “I pass you my crown. You do with scissors what I have done with color.”

James returned to New York in 1939, as much to escape his creditors as to avoid the impending war. Although he had made a strong name for himself in the European circles where art, fashion, and literature converge—he counted the ballerina Alicia Markova, the Com-

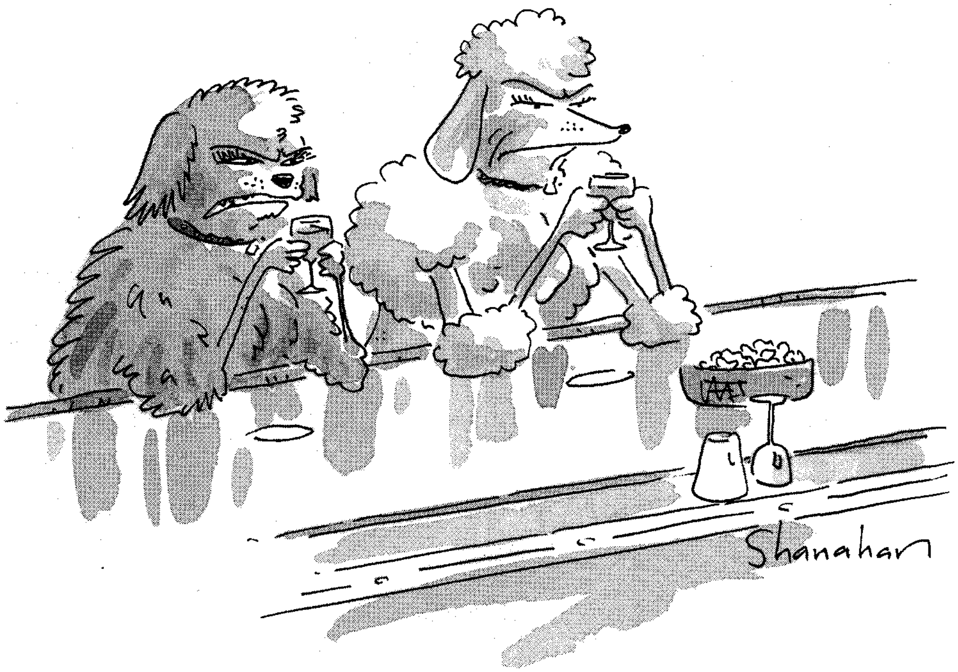


James's white satin padded jacket from 1937, which Salvador Dali heralded as the first soft sculpture (above), and th



HOMAGE TO LILLIAN BASSMAN'S 1955 PHOTOGRAPH

signer's Pagoda suit from 1955. James believed that fashion in America should be on a par with engineering and architecture.



"They're all sons of bitches."

• •

tesse Étienne de Beaumont, and Diana Mitford among his clients—James was still not self-supporting, mainly because he could not fill large orders for his clothes. He was attempting to become an independent American couturier with no sustained financial backing just as the country's ready-to-wear era was beginning.

He soon became friends with Mrs. Elizabeth N. Graham, who was known professionally as Elizabeth Arden. Impressed by James's wit and talent, she made him the chief designer at her salon in 1943 and gave him the space to show his first collection in New York in fourteen years. Their association was brief, but it helped him to establish an American clientele that would remain loyal to him for years, and which included, among others, Austine Hearst and Millicent Rogers, the Standard Oil heiress, who eventually donated to the Brooklyn Museum every piece of Charles James clothing she bought.

The rich, celebrated women James dressed were necessary to his survival, and yet he had an ambivalent relationship with them. Despite his romantic claim that "the relation between all first-class designers and clients is a love affair," with James, always, the primary love affair was between himself and his creation. Frequently, his dresses were delivered months, if not years, later than promised. "Did you know Charles used to like to wear his gowns before he handed them over to a client?" Harold Stevenson asked me. I hadn't, but I wasn't especially surprised. When I'd first begun speaking to James's friends, William Ivey Long had told me that he had in his possession a lithograph James had made of a woman in a Charles James ball gown and, discernible beneath her image, a young man flourishing an erection.

While James's narcissism never prevented others from recognizing his genius, it may have been in part responsible for the transitory state of his love life. "He did not seek what you would call a relationship," Stevenson told me. "He didn't want a lover, he wanted a protégé, someone who was another version of Charles James." In one rare public confession of heartbreak, James told a reporter for *New York* that in the late thirties his unrequited love for a young man in Paris had driven him to hang himself, but that "Jean Cocteau, who lived across the hall from me, cut me down."

As the nineteen-forties proceeded, James's work became increasingly sculptural. "He presented women with a shape that was not their own," Bill Cunningham says. "You went in to Charles James deformed, and you came out a Venus de Milo. He was the equivalent of someone from the Renaissance who made ceremonial armors." Perhaps the ball gowns that James designed in the nineteen-forties were the epitome of this tendency. Richard Martin has written that James simply took Dior "to an Americanized extreme, with more fabric." He continued, "If in receiving an elegant gift box, we are more aware of the fancy ribbon than of the box itself, we know what it is to see a James dress. The soft, attached drapery is so seductive a surface that we are almost unaware of the rigid shell inside."

James has often been praised for his distinctive combinations of structure and surface. The women who wore James evening gowns were sometimes carrying fifteen pounds—twenty-five pieces of fabric and several petticoats. But the gowns could also be remarkably comfortable to wear. They were often asymmetrical, and his most famous ball gown, the "four-leaf-clover" dress, created for Austine Hearst in 1953, was designed with an eye toward how it looked from above as well from front and back.

"The magic spell cast by Charles James's work came into my life on opening night of the Metropolitan Opera in 1948," Bill Cunningham wrote in his essay for Coleman's book, and he continued:

> As in a dream, there appeared on the grand staircase three women gowned and jeweled in ceremonial magnificence, like exotic birds from an enchanted forest. Wearing a white satin and black velvet gown that suggested a swan, Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney stood out, diamonds and emeralds filling in her strapless neckline, a glittering flowered tiara of diamonds and platinum encircling her hair.
>
> The second woman, in a cascade of Tiepolo-blue satin accentuated with navy-blue velvet bodice, her shoulders clouded in yards of blue tulle, was opera singer Risë Stevens.
>
> The patrician posture of the third woman resembled a Boldini portrait from the Belle Epoque. Her gown was a deep garnet-red satin, the bodice molded from velvet, the skirt asymmetrical folds of satin with a fan of starched white pleats bursting from the side. She was the actress Gypsy Rose Lee.

The cost of making such dresses was staggering, and, no matter how much James charged his clients, he often felt cheated, or spent more money on a dress than the client did. Homer Layne, James's assistant at the end of his career, recounted one characteristic dispute between the designer and Gypsy Rose Lee. James had made her a gown that was designed in such a way that she could strip parts of it off and dress five other girls onstage. He wanted her to pay for five garments, whereas she wanted to pay for only one.

James expected his clients to be not only women of fashion but women of science—discerning consumers who would appreciate his scrupulous attention to changing attitudes toward the female body. In a 1952 article in *Look*, he attempted to explain the benefits of his devotion:

> During the last few years, women have stood straighter, with their heads higher—resulting in a new bust angle. Most mass-production dress patterns are two inches wider across the bust, two inches flatter through the bust than they should be. Dresses should allow a margin for movement. . . . My measurements are based on a profound study of shape and silhouette and a careful calculation of depth as well as width.

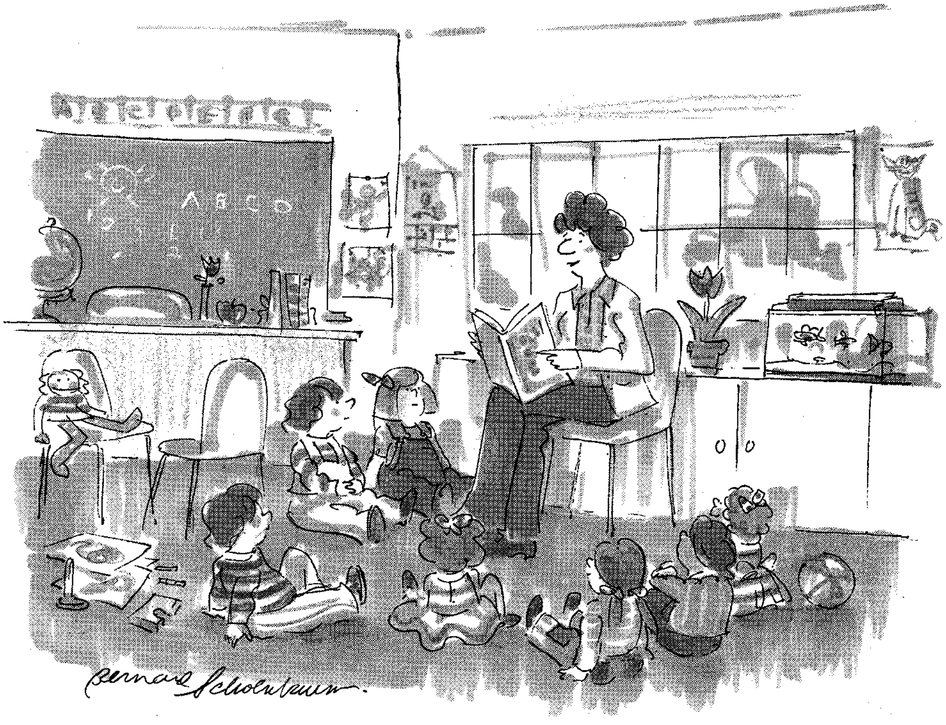
Perhaps the most notorious instance of James's fanaticism was a sleeve that he spent three years and twenty thousand dollars perfecting, in the late forties. In James's view, such accomplishments were shockingly underappreciated, and the ambivalent feelings that the fashion world had for his efforts is clearly apparent in this article from *Collier's*, in 1947:

> Charles James, dressmaker, makes clothes for women in a little upstairs place in New York. He made this sleeve there. It is not, he says, an ordinary sleeve. It is, he says, a revolutionary sleeve. It has one inch more than the usual amount of material in it. A woman can move her arm in this sleeve, he says. Or shrug her shoulders, he says. Or pitch a baseball. All without dislocating her waistline, bunching at the collar, or splitting a gusset. This, he says, is something definitely special in the way of sleeves.

James's relationship with fashion magazines and journalists was generally contentious. Discussing his trouble with what he called "editoresses," he claimed that almost every picture taken of his work for a fashion magazine had been traumatizing; he wanted to maintain complete control, and didn't want to subject his clothes to someone else's vision. Felice Maier, his last publicist, told me, "You'd make an appointment with a fashion magazine, and he would say fine, and you'd come to get the clothes to do the photographs. And he would refuse to let them go." James was especially impolitic about Diana Vreeland, who was then the fashion editor at *Harper's Bazaar*. "Charlie called her an employee," Harold Stevenson recalls. "He said she was ruining couture by coming back to New York from Paris and having these Seventh Avenue hacks make copies of pieces."

BETWEEN 1949 and 1953, James started three businesses, all of which failed. Desperate for money and in trouble with the I.R.S., he made two surprising decisions: to go into business with a manufacturer, and, in 1954, to get married, to Nancy Gregory, a wealthy young woman from Kansas City. "He loved Nancy, but he could be terribly cruel to her in the way that he could be cruel," Felice Maier recalls. "She would serve afternoon tea, but then he would make fun of her because she served canapés covered with a kind of blue goo." Because James was openly homosexual, many people thought he'd married Gregory to improve his finances. But, by this point, it was perhaps difficult for James to distinguish between what was emotionally and economically advantageous. "I wanted to be married," James told *New York* many years later. "That's not so special, is it? No one could believe that I could love a woman. The remarkable thing about marriage is that the same woman each day appears to be a different woman. You play the field with your own sex, each one becomes the same." Gregory supported her husband in a number of businesses, all of which failed.

Shortly before his marriage, James was introduced by Eleanor Lambert, who was then his publicist, to Samuel Winston, the owner of a ready-to-wear blouse company. Despite James's dubious business qualifications, Winston was sufficiently impressed with his design reputation to hire him; James was to execute thirty designs a year—street, afternoon, and evening dresses, jackets, separate skirts and blouses—for a guaranteed salary of fifteen thousand dollars. As Coleman discovered, the first year of their association was a fiscal success for Winston: there was a sixty-percent increase in sales as a result of the pieces James designed. But in July, 1954, when the second year of James's contract ended, he had produced only twelve of the thirty garments. Winston sued for breach of contract; James countersued Winston and his head designer, Roxanne Kaminstein, who had been selling adaptations and reproductions of



"Children, today's story works on many levels."

his designs under her own label, and sought five hundred thousand dollars in damages.

The case dragged on for fourteen months. Finally, the judge ruled in James's favor, but the case was ruinous to the designer, both publicly and privately, and the settlement, nineteen thousand dollars, was immediately claimed by the federal government for back taxes. Eleanor Lambert had been forced to testify on Winston's behalf during the trial. "When I left the witness stand," she told me, "Charlie raised his hands like claws and lunged for my throat—the bailiff had to restrain him. For years afterward, I'd get these terrible phone calls from Charlie, berating me."

James's battle was not only with Samuel Winston but with Seventh Avenue itself, and its lack of respect for the idea of American couture. Lois Long had accurately predicted, in 1949, that James was bound to be "outnumbered, outfinanced, and outshouted by the ponderous giants of the giant American women's clothing industry." And yet he persevered in his crusade. In 1956, in an essay entitled "The Shape," he asked:

> Could it be different? Could America call forth its own true talent, to be given equal prestige with foreign designers? Could American talent really influence its own market? I think yes, a thousand times YES. . . . This is a country of engineering and architectural genius, which, in the fashion world, should be firmly wedded to the push of business. I hope to see someday this genius solidly incorporated into design, thereby making our market less dependent on expense-account trips which lead to purchasing abroad what could be but is NOT made here. . . . I see an opportunity for American fashion design to rank with what is best in our fine native literature, architecture, and science.

In a 1957 letter to the *World-Telegram & Sun,* James predicted how name-brand recognizability would subsume the designer as individual and artist. "The whole fashion world in this country, from fashion groups to magazines, press, buyers and merchandise managers, have willfully confused manufacturing with couture," he wrote. "The couture business has been allowed to die. Since the war, it has been increasingly difficult to obtain fashion coverage in any paper without some wholesale copy of one's design being available in the local stores. Custom designers, therefore, who do not have the power to license their names and protect the use of that license simply cannot imprint their signatures on the public mind."

In the meantime, the Jameses' marriage, which had produced two children—Charles, Jr., and Louise—was crumbling. James's poor business sense and catastrophic lawsuit against Sam Winston had depleted most of his wife's fortune, and by 1957 both husband and wife were under the care of the notorious Max Jacobson—Dr. Feelgood. In 1958, they lived in sixteen hotels in four cities. They separated, finally, in 1960.

Louise James, who as a child lived in Kansas City, told me that growing up with only the myth of her father's genius was difficult: "We always knew he was a great artist, but I just wanted a dad. No one else could be an artist, because he was the artist, you understand." Although James remained in touch with his ex-wife and children, they visited him very rarely. Louise saw her father for the last time when she was sixteen, on a weekend visit to New York. The visit began lightheartedly enough—James became indignant when the airport restaurant refused to serve them only dessert, and he sprinted off with the menu board—but it ended badly, when Louise refused to go to a salon with her father to have her hair cut: an act of defiance that she regrets to this day.

IN 1964, James moved to his final residence, the Chelsea Hotel. He was bitter and alone. The grandiose words that he had written some years earlier in a piece on Paul Poiret now described his perception of his own tenuous circumstances: "It is the destiny of many great artists to read of their influence on a world that has left them for dead, and could not see fit to provide for their living expenses."

He was still working, but he continued to default on contracts, and his clients, even the loyal long-term ones, began to turn to him less and less frequently. He made forays into jewelry design and erotic drawing, and began teaching at Pratt Institute. It was at Pratt that he met Homer Layne, a student who earned James's respect because he understood the intricacies of pattern cutting as James taught it, when other students had little interest or couldn't do the work. (In an uncharacteristically generous moment, James once said, "Homer knows better how to resolve a design than I do.") Layne went to work for James, and remained a faithful assistant and friend until the designer's death. James would often pay Layne only to take back half the money in order to buy fabric or food or a book.

While James's most innovative designs had been achieved before the end of the nineteen-fifties, he was still revered by designers for his technical skill. In 1966, Halston produced a line of clothes that were so badly put together, according to Layne, that they were returned. Halston prevailed upon the older designer to help him with future collections, which James did. Steven Gaines, in his biography of Halston, writes that the younger designer was "enthralled" with James, and considered him an *artiste.* Gaines continues, "Halston began to look at cut and construction through James's eye, and his fashion vision broadened." James also introduced Halston to his designs—the Figure 8 dress, the Taxi dress—many of which Layne claims Halston stole and reinterpreted for his 1972 Coty Award-winning collection.

The relationship broke up in 1970, but before that Halston tried to rehabilitate James's reputation in the fashion world, which considered James too eccentric, too angry, too uncompromising. In 1969, Halston sponsored an exhibition of James's work at the Electric Circus, a popular disco. He also hired James to work in his atelier (a reporter described James's workspace as a cross between "a doctor's office and an artist's workroom with anatomical drawings on the walls, some headless forms of the human body, and a surgical white decor"), but James couldn't produce in time for Halston to make a collection. Halston tried to interpret what the master engineer intended, with disastrous results, and the collaboration ended acrimoniously. The best James could say of Halston in later years was that the rich and famous designer once gave him a pair of shoes. William Ivey Long said of James, “He wasn’t amused until he did the intellectual equivalent of auto-asphyxiation. He was so used to disappointment that he knew it would happen, so he wanted to provoke it himself.”

THE CAB OF GUILT
This is your mother, reminding you that if you don't buckle up I will kill myself.

AT the end of his life, James experienced a renaissance of sorts, after he was befriended by Antonio Lopez, who was at the center of New York’s hip fashion world, a friend of Jerry Hall, Jessica Lange, and Andy Warhol. Antonio would sit for hours at a time sketching clothes in James’s suite at the Chelsea while James talked through his history, his words mingling with the wet-wool smell of aging garments and his dog, Sputnik. Sometimes students or reporters would come by. The *Village Voice* columnist Guy Trebay, who had met James through Antonio, wrote in a letter:

> My clearest recollected image of Charles is him swanning around the suite wearing some nutty outfit (my favorite was a belt-cinched white man’s shirt with the collar turned up, giant platform shoes, and Jockey shorts) followed by a wheezing Sputnik in a plastic Elizabethan collar. Striding around on skinny old man’s legs, he’d ventilate ancient injuries, gossip in the present tense about the dead . . . and every so often talk obliquely about his wrecked career and his estranged family . . . and all the people who’d done him wrong. It seemed odd then—although it’s less so now—that he never described the events of his life in a way that suggested he’d had any hand in the mess.

The mess that James made of things was always secondary to his concern that he be remembered for his work, and certainly he will remain a cult figure in the fashion world for years to come. In 1996, an anonymous bidder at Christie’s paid nearly fifty thousand dollars for a black silk evening dress that James designed, and gave it to Azzedine Alaïa as a gift. But it is difficult to have widespread influence in fashion if you refuse to cultivate the means to disseminate your designs to a mass audience. In a 1975 interview, Diana Vreeland said of James’s career, “If you’re not copied, you’re nobody. Let them copy, let them steal. There’s no such thing as originality.” And yet it was his originality that James was most ferocious about protecting. Ironically, however, James never had a generally recognizable, paradigmatic shape, like his admirer Dior, nor did he create a piece of clothing that has entered the fashion vocabulary, like the Chanel suit. His creations were so varied, so rare and so rarefied, and so infrequently produced that they remain largely unknown.

When James died, on September 23, 1978, of bronchial pneumonia and arteriosclerotic heart disease, the legacy he’d worked so hard to insure was in disarray. The Brooklyn Museum already had a significant number of his clothing designs, writings, and letters, and yet even now—twenty years later, and sixteen years after Coleman’s retrospective—the museum will not permit scholars access to these files, claiming that it doesn’t know who owns them or what’s in them. Many of the drawings of James’s designs which Antonio executed for posterity are scattered among minor institutions and friends.

James’s will was voided for irregularities, and he left no clear directions about what to do with the contents of his apartment and studio; Nancy James eventually sold her ex-husband’s effects to Homer Layne for a dollar. Despite Layne’s continued devotion to Mr. James, as he calls him, this legacy has been a burden. In addition to oversized black scrapbooks that James kept throughout his career, Layne owns nine boxes of James’s writings, but he no longer remembers what the boxes contain; they’ve been stored in Brooklyn and Long Island City for years. In the early eighties, a number of garments designed by James for Samuel Winston came up for auction; Homer Layne bought nearly seventy cocktail dresses, suits, and jackets, and they are now crammed into two lockers. What one notices first about these pieces of clothing is not their exquisite form or cut but the crooked collars and the faded colors and the tulle smashed flat. Everything has the dead smell of clothes left too long in storage. ♦

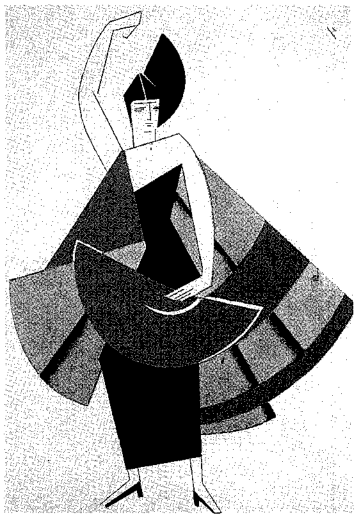
LETTER FROM MOSCOW

FADE TO RED?

Style in the land of anti-style.

BY MASHA LIPMAN

All over Moscow these days, two razor-boned young women look down from enormous billboards and watch over the citizenry with the sort of gaze that the images of Lenin and Marx once cast on us. Amber Valletta and Kate Moss, who are wearing sleeveless turtlenecks—one fuchsia, the other magenta—implore the masses to buy copies of *Vogue*, which just this month began publishing a Russian-language edition.



Through no fault of the editors, the timing of the launch has turned out to be problematic. These are distinctly inelegant times, even for the so-called new Russians, the nouveau-riche urbanites. The ruble is losing value, banks are failing, and President Boris Yeltsin is evoking memories of Brezhnev in his senescent last days. On September 1st, two weeks after the Russian stock market lost about forty per cent of its value, measured in dollars, *Vogue* cancelled plans for a black-tie opening gala close to Red Square. It was a sensible decision. Suddenly, Russia is no longer just muddling through; rather, we are tumbling deeper into a financial and political abyss. Newspapers like *Kommersant* and *Russki Telegraph*, which had been filled with buoyant reports of emerging markets and restaurant openings, now tell us about a return to economic isolation and hyperinflation, about a forced march to Soviet-style monopolies and the renationalization of banks.

For me, that's all the more reason to turn to *Vogue*, and also to *Marie Claire*, *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Cosmopolitan*, and a rack of other glossies. Fashion, more than ever, seems like another world, as distant as Milan is from Sakhalin. If only for a moment or two, one finds relief in its fantastical optimism. "Moscow is the place where you've got to be right now," Donna Karan told Russian *Vogue*, and Gucci's creative director Tom Ford added, "I'm dying to come back and see Russia after all the changes."

When Ford spoke to *Vogue*, however, he was undoubtedly referring to democratic changes and market reforms. Will he really want to make another visit if the second round of changes throws Russia back to, say, 1986? I picked up *Vogue* and read about the joys of wearing "red from head to toe—in the morning and in the evening, outdoors and at home." Unavoidably, I found myself thinking that red, still the color of the Communist Party, may indeed stage a comeback soon in Russia. This season, red is the color of my blues.

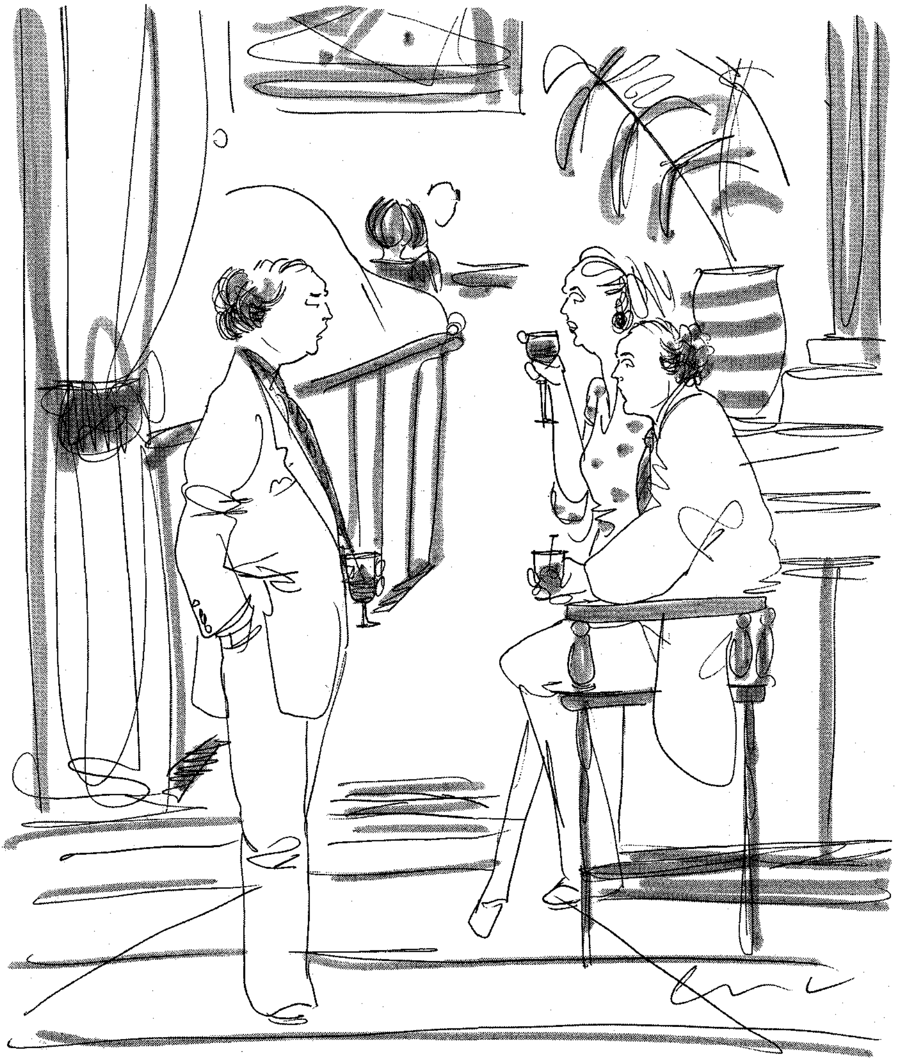
Kuznetsky Most is a short, narrow shopping street not far from the Kremlin. In the nineteenth century, it was famous for its fashion boutiques; in the late twentieth century, there are boutiques and an art gallery and several Soviet-style stores. Names like Christian Lacroix and Versace, cK Calvin Klein and Donna Karan, Trussardi and Kenzo, Gianfranco Ferre and Gucci, Armani and Yves Saint Laurent are familiar in Moscow, and those who can't afford their products—which is just about everybody—see the advertisements or hear Russian celebrities talking on television about their favorite designers.

At the Christian Lacroix boutique,

A 1924 costume design (left) and couture-cl

HANS-JÜRGEN BURKARD, BILDERBERG/AURORA; OPPOSITE, ALEXANDRA EXTER, 1924; LOBANOV COLLECTION

bway riders. Russian style—from Pushkin's dandies to Rodchenko's overalls—has found expression, even in the country's darkest days.



"Connie and I have broken through to a new level. We're divorced."

• •

two armed guards stood at the door, but inside I was greeted by three young saleswomen. We got to talking, and at first they sounded confident. They had been in business since December, and they had special clients whom they rang up whenever there was something new and chic on sale. Right now, they were running low on merchandise, but they really did expect the fall collection to arrive any day. Furthermore, they assured me, Christian Lacroix was coming in person to introduce it. Maybe, I thought, Donna Karan was right—Moscow *is* the place to be—and yet I couldn't help asking, "Don't you expect this crisis to affect your business?"

"Not unless there's revolution and people begin to kill each other," one of them said.

The conversation continued in a casual, friendly fashion, but the mood abruptly changed when I asked, "Do you think a revolution is likely?"

"Of course it is," another said. "I'm talking not as a boutique representative but as a woman and as a mother. Anything can be expected in this country. And nobody trusts this country. Over the past year and a half or two years, nobody has trusted Russia." Apparently, Christian Lacroix's faith in Russia is fading, too. After my visit to his boutique, the designer's Paris headquarters said that his trip to Moscow had been postponed.

Not far away is the Gianfranco Ferre Studio boutique, which opened in June. It is in a large, gleaming mall called Petrovsky Passage, near the Bolshoi Theatre. The mall features all manner of international boutiques: Kenzo, Givenchy, Lancôme. But the foot traffic here, once brisk, is somewhat hushed. At Gianfranco Ferre, the last remnants of the summer collection are on sale at forty to fifty per cent off. (A suit that was once five thousand three hundred rubles, or eight hundred and fifty dollars, is now three thousand rubles.) Despite the bargains, there are few takers.

"All through the summer, we might sell as many as twenty articles a day," one saleswoman told me, smiling with pride. "Even though we've been in business only since June, we have already begun to form a permanent clientele. They call us asking when the new collection is arriving. They even called after the crisis began. Unfortunately, we can't tell them anything about prices."

"There's always a crisis in this country," another salesgirl said. "It will calm down." Then a little chill of anxiety seemed to hit her and she added, "Do you think it's worse this time?"

Around the corner from Christian Lacroix there's a jeans store called Big Star. An English-language notice on the door reads "Closed." There's also a Russian sign saying "Closed for technical reasons," a newly coined euphemism meaning "We haven't figured out any new prices yet."

I CAN'T say that all of this is not strange sometimes, even for those of us who have spent half our lives yearning for a radical change. After decades of solemn reports on the wheat harvest, our journalism now occasionally uses the hermetic style of the fashion press, which we parse at our peril. Even seven years into "post-Communism," the Russian ear (or mine, at least) has a hard time adjusting. Not long ago, a miniskirt was described as "reminiscent of patchwork"; it took me a minute to figure out that the barbarous-sounding Russian word *pechvork*, which I came across in the August issue of *Woman*, was, in fact, "patchwork." I suppose most fashion readers know the word, because it was not included in the accompanying glossary, which did include the words "teddy," "bodysuit," and "French knickers."

Over the years, foreign friends—mostly Americans—were always shocked by the idea that Russians might take any interest in fashion. To them, the Soviet Union was the incarnation of anti-style, so much so that the Wendy's hamburger chain used to run commercials featuring a Soviet "fashion show," which featured a very fat woman wearing burlap. Well, no one would deny that we are still a poor country, and poverty does not allow for much crêpe de chine, but for decades our realities and private aspirations—even our rebellions—have been reflected in what we've chosen to design and wear. A riddle wrapped in an enigma wrapped in a cocoon of flair, you might say.

FASHION has almost always come to Russia from the West. In the nineteenth century, Russian noblemen emulated their European counterparts in attitudes, literary taste, life style, even language. And, of course, clothes. Here is Pushkin (in Babette Deutsch's translation) on Eugene Onegin, a Russian aristocrat:

> What London haberdashers hallow
> We buy with timber and with tallow:
> 'Tis here, to please a lavish whim,
> With all a dandy's mind can limn,
> And all that Paris in her passion
> For the most costly merchandise
> So elegantly can devise
> To tempt the sporting man of fashion
> Observe his closet well, and gage
> Thereby our eighteen-year-old sage.

In the early twentieth century, however, Europe was overrun by a wave of Russian refinement, particularly Serge Diaghilev's extravagant Ballets Russes, which came to Paris in 1909. Audiences were taken as much by the innovative sets and elegant costumes by León Bakst, Alexandre Benois, and Nikolay Roerich as by the dancing of Nijinsky, Fokine, and Karsavina. Suddenly, the stereotypical Russia of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky—the literary Russia, eternally in search of truth, the obsessive country that rejects the banality of surfaces—displayed a grace and a subtlety unfamiliar to European audiences. Yet all the stylish promise of the Ballets Russes never spawned a lasting Russian fashion designer, to say nothing of a Russian fashion industry. If there was a fledgling elegance in the country, it disappeared shortly after Lenin arrived at the Finland Station. And, at the same time, all our would-be fashion titans (many of them White Russians) left for Paris and elsewhere. Little did we know that the son of one of Lenin's confidants, the young Alexander Liberman, would emigrate and go on to shape the American tastemaker Condé Nast.

The October Revolution tried to cast aside the old world: anything deemed bourgeois was condemned, and dressing nicely was distinctly—fatally—bourgeois. Out went anything remotely feminine for women and formal suits for men. In came the leather jacket of the commissar (with Mauser revolvers as accessories). My grandparents, who saw the Revolution as the coming of a new world, adopted the ascetic style of the Bolsheviks. Not only did they reject fashion; they stopped celebrating birthdays and anniversaries, threw out all their furniture, and ate their meals off butcher paper.

Lenin himself, after spending so many of his pre-Revolutionary years as a political exile in Europe, continued to wear a three-piece suit and a tie. But, unlike his ideas, Lenin's fashion statement never became the rage. The generation of the twenties combined *narodny*, or folk, style with the severe utility of military dress. "A service jacket cut from a gray blanket together with a *malorossijsky*"—Ukrainian—"embroidered shirt showing from underneath": such is the outfit of a Soviet bureaucrat disguised as the devil in Mikhail Bulgakov's novella "Diaboliad." Most of Bulgakov's works were inspired by his hatred of the Revolution and of the Bolsheviks' elimination of individual style. In photographs, Bulgakov invariably appears in a conservative suit and hat, an outfit that underscored his alienation and made him a suspicious figure in a world in which a fellow-playwright, such as Vsevolod Vishnevsky, appeared at rehearsals wearing a politically correct leather jacket and, to be sure, a Mauser.

IN the early twenties, the New Economic Policy brought back some elements of capitalism—the taste for the good life, good clothes and food, music and entertainment—and genuine revolutionary spirits were disgusted. Nevertheless, the Russian avant-garde took a keen interest in fashion—although, to be sure, revolutionary fashion. Alexander Rodchenko designed his own overalls. Kazimir Malevich's paintings suggested a kind of Suprematist color scheme—all bold,

"I was attracted by his edgy cynicism, but I hated his cologne."

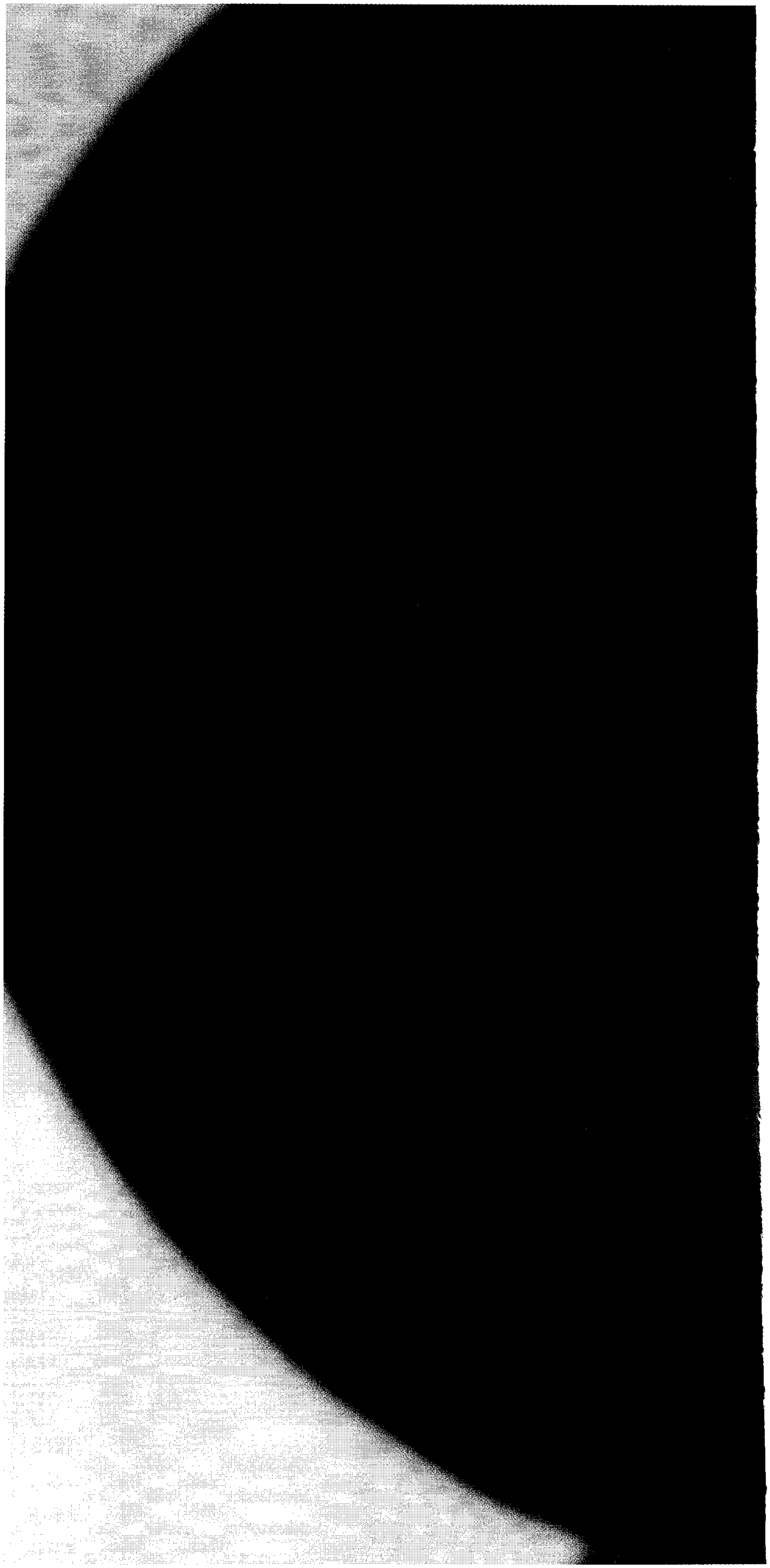
stark shades. Lyubov Popova brought a Cubist edge to her costume designs for the theatre, and she designed coats and dresses as distinctive as any abroad.

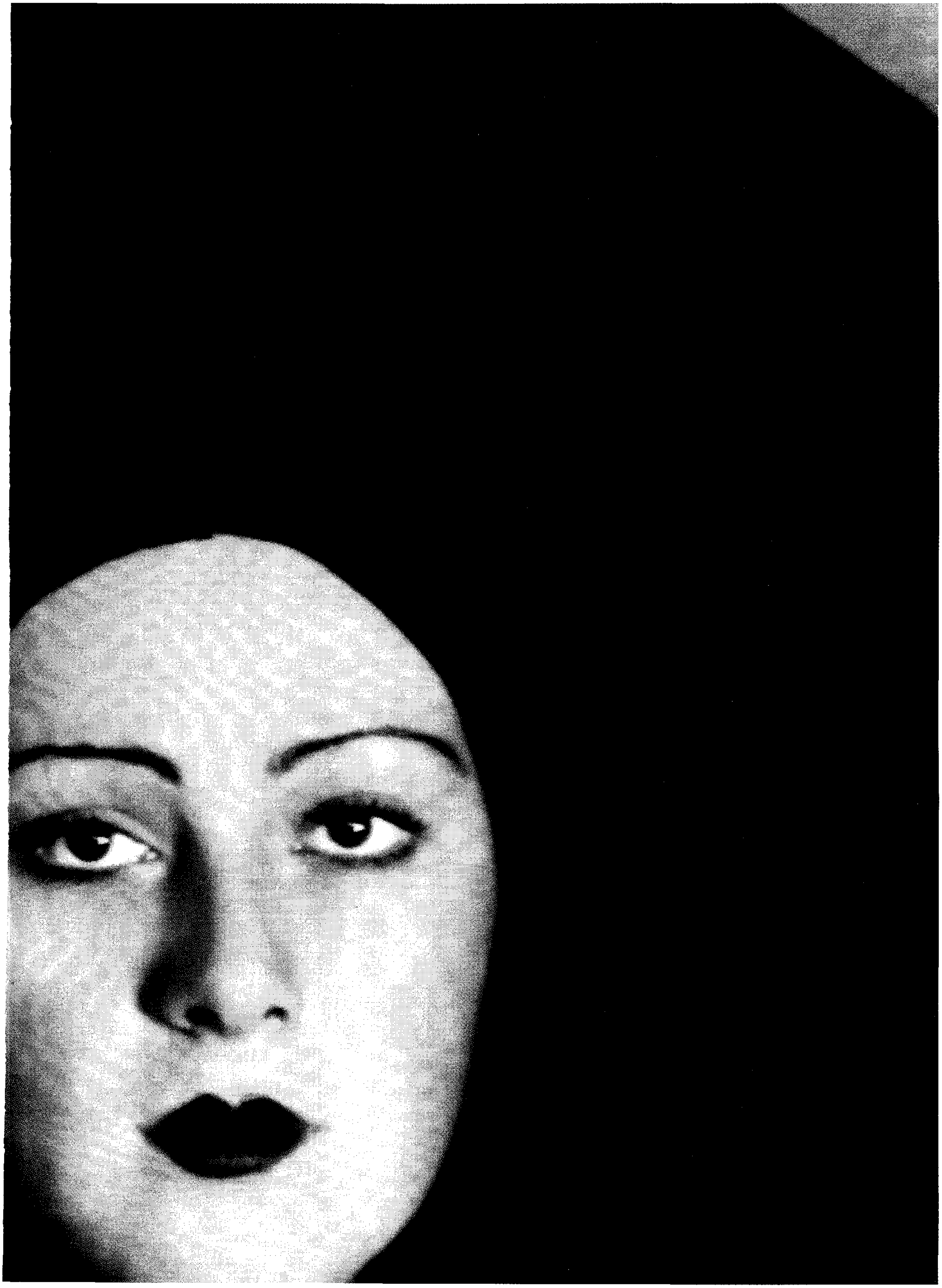
Even beyond the artistic world, the yearning for style blossomed under the New Economic Policy. In Ilf and Petrov's novel "The Twelve Chairs," a Soviet engineer's wife is obsessed with emulating a rich American woman she reads about in a French fashion magazine. The scene is Moscow, 1927: "The glossy photograph showed the daughter of the American billionaire Vanderbilt wearing an evening dress. There was fur and feathers, silk and pearls, extraordinary lightness of design and a mind-boggling haircut." The engineer's wife buys "a dog skin which was meant to look like a muskrat. This was used for the adornment of the evening outfit."

Yet even in the most terrible days of the Stalin era, after the New Economic Policy was crushed, citizens remained aware of style. Movies from the West were occasionally shown, and one could try to copy the clothing worn by such movie stars as Mary Pickford. Meanwhile, Communist Party officials and secret-police bosses, diplomats and bureaucrats enjoyed the privilege of foreign trips on business or for medical

PORTRAITIST

"I was to be a photographer," Lotte Jacobi once said, reflecting, late in life, on the beginnings of her career. Jacobi (1896-1990) grew up in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the family studio (she was a fourth-generation photographer) and developed a strong-minded curiosity. She devised an approach to portraiture which synthesized her inherited formalism with the freer aim of conveying the personality of the sitter. In 1928, she made an iconic image, at once captivating and vulnerable, of the unknown Lotte Lenya, just before her début as Jenny in "The Threepenny Opera." The smoldering yet anonymous "Head of a Dancer" (at right; 1929) conveys the essence of Jacobi's assured and intimate style. Both photographs are included in a collection of her work, "Atelier Lotte Jacobi: Berlin–New York," to be published by Nicolai/D.A.P. in October.





COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

treatment; they brought back from Paris and London crates of dresses, bottles of perfume, and, generally, a sense of style, however rudimentary. Years later, high Party officials would establish top-secret tailor shops; in the most élite of those shops, tailors with security clearances made mannequin replicas of Politburo members so that the men of the Party leadership could order their new gray suits on the telephone without wasting precious time.

In the late fifties and sixties, as the Iron Curtain pulled back slightly, we began to see Soviet versions of Western hipness. The *stilyagi* (our Beats) adored Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker and craved outfits consisting of skintight pants, a big-shouldered jacket, and thick-soled shoes. The lucky *stilyagi* bought their clothes from the rare foreign visitor; others had to make do by taking in their Soviet-made trousers. They would strut along the streets of Moscow and Leningrad in their stylish stuff, defying the police, who would sometimes chase them down and "slash open their seditious narrow pants," as Vassily Aksyonov recalls in his autobiographical novel "The Burn."

Young people in big cities tried to keep up with their Western counterparts, but Soviet industry kept grinding out the same drab, gray stuff. Legend has it that, sometime in the sixties, the French actor and singer Yves Montand was titillated by a kind of Soviet women's underwear called a *shtany*—a longish, baggy, thick, ugly thing. The writer Tatyana Tolstaya recalls, in an article in Russian *Vogue*, that there was nothing more shameful for a girl than for somebody to see her *shtany:* "Maletskaya fell down and her *shtany* could be seen—warm, flannelette, lilac. How horrible!" As for Montand, the story is that he bought a collection of Soviet undergarments to take back home to Paris, where he planned to organize a private exhibition.

Under Brezhnev, the U.S.S.R. became a consumer society without consumer goods; in the face of shortages, the Soviet people developed clothes obsessions. The tiniest detail—a collar line, the shape of buttons or pockets—would be reproduced at home by self-taught tailors. To create the flared trousers you saw in foreign films, you sewed in a wedge running from the knee to the rim of your old trousers. You'd spend an entire day waiting in line for a rare imported article; you'd think nothing of spending a month's wages on a pair of tight knee-high boots; you dreamed of a suède jacket. And if you had the privilege of foreign trips, you could take everyone's breath away. The symbol of all we did not possess was a pair of bluejeans. "A boy from a rich jeans family," a girlfriend of mine would say dreamily as she described somebody whose *nomenklatura* parents worked abroad and spoiled their pampered son with denim. To have both jeans and a jeans jacket—this was the fulfillment of an impossible Soviet dream. In Aksyonov's "The Burn," a foreign wife of a Russian playboy longing to outdo and outdress all the local women adorns herself in a "long suède skirt with a front cut running up to her pelvis, suède underwear, high suède boots, suède jacket, suède . . . pelerine, suède umbrella and a suède bag for vegetables."

More recently, in the post-Gorbachev, post-perestroika years, clothes have returned to the Russian market. This has produced some distinctly un-Soviet situation comedy. Russian *Vogue's* editor-in-chief, Aliona Doletskaya, described her delight in finding a terrific Issey Miyake outfit in London and then her disappointment to discover, at a Moscow soirée, that someone else was wearing the same garment.

For others, fashion developed as a semiotic system indicating degrees of economic position and even of physical threat. The leather jacket, once the symbol of selfless struggle against capitalism, became in the early nineties the preferred garment of the post-Soviet hustler. The new gangster capitalists, much like their revolutionary forebears, wore their leather jackets with firearms as accessories and were no less ready to use them. Unlike their predecessors, however, they wore heavy gold chains and were often accompanied by underdressed women.

Handelsman

"It's my family coat of arms, Joe—smoked salmon couchant on a field of cream cheese."

In a recent interview in *Kommersant*, an Italian tailor tells the story of his first Russian client: "It was like in a bad thriller. Two minutes before lunch break a handsome guy entered my shop. After he made sure that I was the man he was looking for, he announced, 'I wear two pistols on me. Make me a suit that would hide them even with the coat buttoned.' "

But in the age of reform, as business life became respectable and a middle class began to emerge, people became more sophisticated about clothing. Now this tailor has permanent clients in Moscow. Some of them are members of the Duma.

PROBABLY the person hurt most by the invasion of foreign fashion designers to the Russian market was Slava Zaitsev, who was for years the only clothing designer of note in the Soviet Union—in fact, the only designer authorized to introduce Soviet haute couture to the world. Zaitsev's House of Fashion, on Prospekt Mira, is a multistory building in the bland Soviet style. His look—close-cropped hair, black suit, tuxedo shirt, and bow tie—is familiar to all.

The other day, I stopped by to see Zaitsev, who is a youthful sixty. His office is decorated in fashionable black wood and features elegant lamps and a framed picture of the designer with Boris Yeltsin. When the economic reforms began, Zaitsev told me, he lost many customers to his Western competitors. "Now is the first year when I've begun to win back clients," he said. "I think the Russians have had enough of mass-produced imports. And all these clothes in the boutiques lack soul, they lack my energy. I charge every piece. My clothes are alive."

Perhaps. What is true is that, in an empire of uniformity, of burly outerwear and industrial undergarments, he was the exception. (Like the poets Yevtushenko and Voznesensky, he was given official license to be rebellious, not least because Soviet officialdom could trust him not to take his rebellions very far.) Even in the gray days of late Communism, Party officials put up with Zaitsev's orange pants and tomato-red shirt, his canary-yellow maxicoat and white fur hat. He was the token designer, and he played the role with panache.

Victoria Roberts

"When you asked me to dinner, I had an inkling it would be dinner theatre."

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In 1988, in the full flower of perestroika, Zaitsev became his own boss at the House of Fashion and a true celebrity. People waited in line to buy Slava Zaitsev clothes. (Even Raisa Gorbachev, the first Kremlin clotheshorse, took an interest. According to Zaitsev, Mrs. Gorbachev used to insist that her clothes had been designed by him—which he says wasn't the case.) After the collapse of Communism, he endured, and prevailed: he was entrusted to design robes for the justices of the Constitutional Court, the first such court in the history of Russia.

These days, Zaitsev tries to show a certain magnanimity toward his Western competitors. "In principle, I salute the appearance of their boutiques," he said. "They exist all over the world, so why should we be different? It's especially good for our young designers and for the older ones who cannot afford to travel abroad." Zaitsev conceded that if Western boutiques have to leave Russia as a result of economic collapse and political backlash, it will be good for his business. "But, as a person, I highly respect my colleagues," he said. "My ambitions yield to my benevolence." His alarm about the current crisis is tied, above all, to his fears about the look of Russia, and Russians: "If, God forbid, something happens, and an embargo is imposed upon us and borders are closed, what will people wear?"

What *will* people wear if the Communists succeed in turning back history? Zaitsev recalled the early days of his career, when he designed his first collection for peasants and workers—padded jackets, skirts, and *valenki* (felt boots). But these days even Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist Party leader, is looking rather natty as he seeks to defeat his capitalist enemies. Indeed, when I see him wearing elegant suits I find myself wondering where in the world he bought them. ♦

LETTER FROM PARIS

HAUTE ANXIETY

Can a French fashion bureaucrat unravel the couture conundrum?

BY REBECCA MEAD

TWO things at which the French are demonstrably more accomplished than the inhabitants of perhaps any other nation are (1) the making of elaborate, expensive clothes; and (2) the conducting of loud, disruptive workers'-rights protests. So it was a singularly Gallic confluence when, one morning during July's haute-couture shows in Paris, a group of seamstresses and tailors took to the streets to protest the loss of couture jobs and the shuttering of couture departments. There, on the crowded Rue de Castiglione, where fashion editors and couture clients milled about in their Sabrina heels, flourishing their invitations to Yves Saint Laurent's winter, 1999, collection, the couture workers plied their sewing machines and wielded their irons. Gendarmes, presumably called in to guard against a violent outbreak of pincushion-hurling, looked on, mercifully unperturbed.

Sewing machines are about as out of place on the Rue de Castiglione as King Canute's throne was on the seashore, and as ineffectual. Haute couture, in which fanciful dresses are handmade in wildly costly materials, remains the foundation of the unswerving French belief in the superiority of the Paris fashion industry, but it is becoming more and more redundant as sartorial habits have changed. As the demonstrating *petites mains* pointed out, a third of couture jobs have been lost since 1990. The number of fashion houses producing couture clothing has declined by fifty per cent since the sixties—the most recent closure being that of the Nina Ricci department. Seen in that light, the workers outside Saint Laurent's show looked like nothing so much as Luddites, futilely protesting the relentless rush of modernity.

But there was also a way in which the demonstration was entirely fitting—the perfect couture moment. Absurdity is intrinsic to haute couture: when a designer can (as Alexander McQueen did at Givenchy this season) title his collection "Endogenous, Russian, Amazonian," show it in Napoleon III's gilded Cirque d'Hiver, begin it by sending out a girl riding sidesaddle on a horse and wearing nothing but a wreath of flowers and a very long wig, and expect his audience to say, "Oh, yeah, *I* get it," then you know that rationality has been more or less entirely dispensed with. Given that the French prize reason at least as much as they prize fashion, haute couture presents a knotty problem: how to make a rational case for something that is so patently irrational and also happens to be proof of the glory of France.

FRANCE being what it is, there's a bureaucracy in place which does precisely that: the Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode. As of this summer, it has a new president, one Didier Grumbach, who is about as well equipped as anyone could be to make a case for couture. Grumbach is the former head of the Mendès textile company (his uncle was Pierre Mendès-France, the late French statesman), the past president of Thierry Mugler, dean of studies at Paris's Institut Français de la Mode, and the author of a serious-minded 1993 book, "Histoires de la Mode." So this season, as the weary, perennial question "Whither haute couture?" was asked, Paris was able to say, "Well, *thither*," and gesture in the direction of Didier Grumbach.

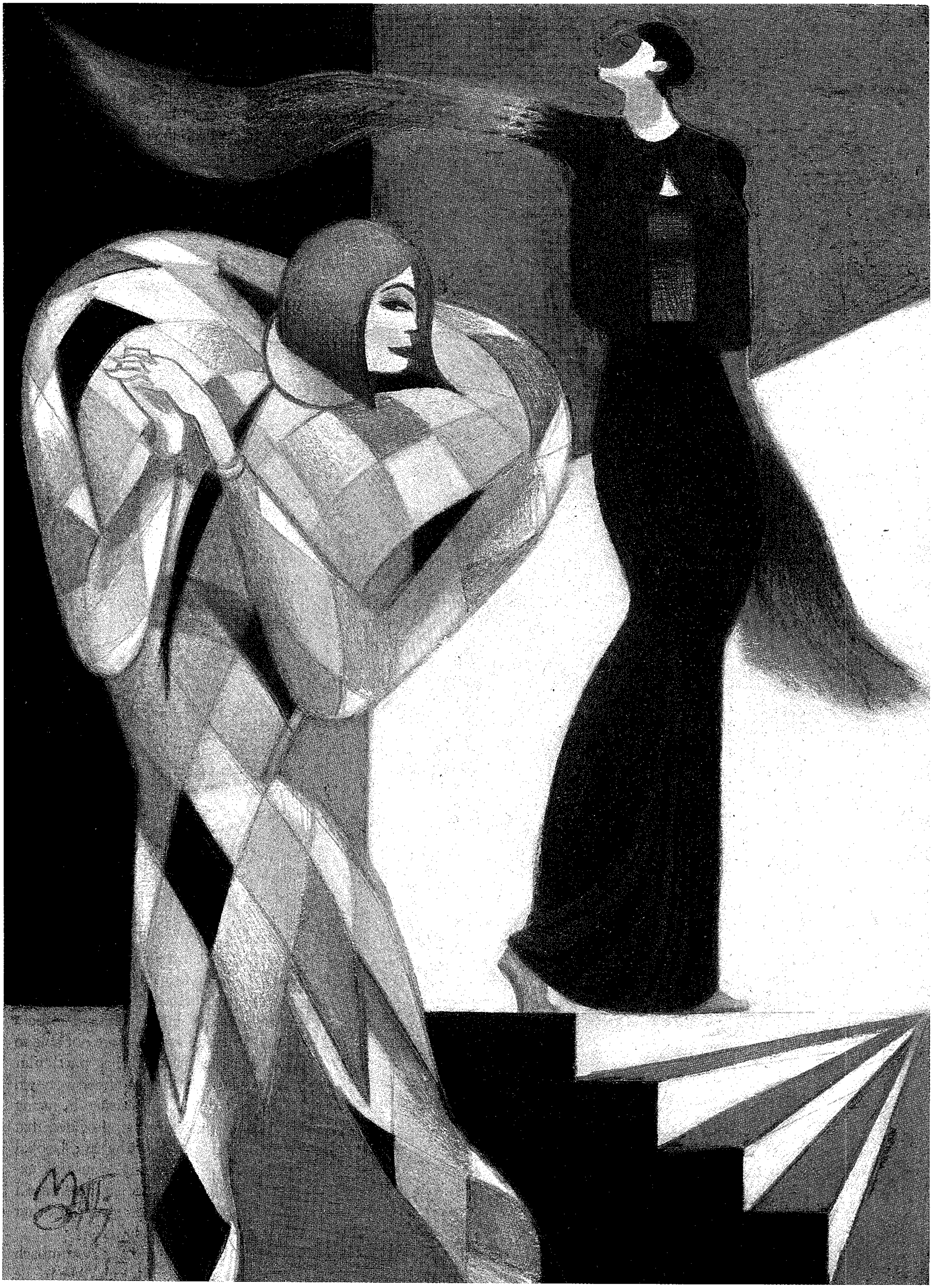
I visited Paris's premier fashion bureaucrat in the federation's headquarters, on the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Grumbach's new office, a former conference room, had gray-mauve walls and a boarded-over fireplace; a vase of week-old roses sat on the mantelpiece, their sweetish odor thickening in the air. The federation has a role similar to that of the Council of Fashion Designers of America: both organizations manage the calendars of the shows and act as a central industry body. But being president of the federation carries a far greater cultural weight than the equivalent position in America: Grumbach's job places him somewhere between being president of the board of Lincoln Center and being Commissioner of Baseball.

Grumbach is a measured, sober man of sixty-one, professorial in the French style, which is to say both erudite and well dressed. In an industry where flamboyance is the norm, he is deeply earnest, and he takes fashion extremely seriously. "In Paris, fashion is nothing frivolous," Grumbach told me. "It is deep in us."

High seriousness is the prevailing spirit of the haute-couture collections—unlike the ready-to-wear collections, where the mood is more pragmatic and commercial. It was with high seriousness that the couture crowd greeted the offerings of Donatella Versace, whose first couture collection was shown on a translucent runway covering the Hotel Ritz swimming pool. As Melanie Griffith, seated front and center, scrutinized the show through dark glasses, models paraded in vampish dresses cut close to the body, punk fronds of raw silk splaying out from the occasional shoulder seam; or in apron skirts, which were draped long in the front and became hot pants in the rear. High seriousness was also the spirit in which Jean Paul Gaultier's show was received. He took over an *hôtel particulier* on the Left Bank, swathed its chandeliers and walls in tulle for a Miss Havisham effect, and presented a series of loopy but chic outfits: a tailored suit with sleeves of long-haired fur, as if the jacket were morphing into a Banana Splits costume; a leather coat with funnel-shaped sleeves made from what appeared to be the feathers of birds of paradise. The mood of seriousness even continued when, later in the week, John Galliano proposed that the Dior woman should kit herself out in Tudor knickers and Medici ruffs topped with a Native American blanket coat.

The relation of these clothes to any-

LORENZO MATTOTTI



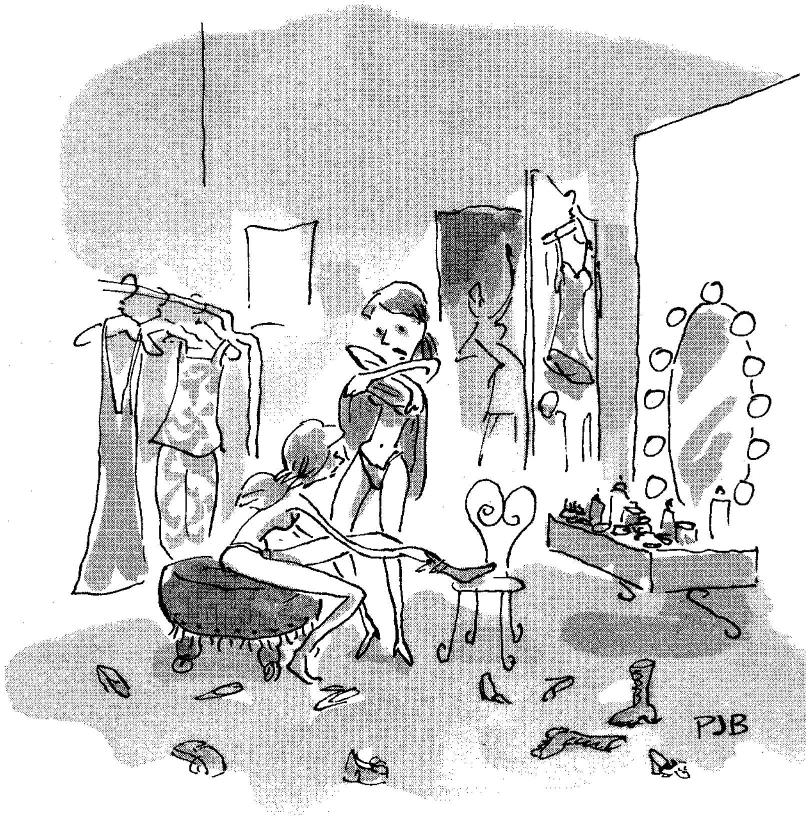
Designs by Viktor & Rolf (left) and Jean Paul Gaultier, both of which exemplify the cultural condition of couture: insouciant obscurity.

thing that women might actually wear was obscure, which is the cultural condition of couture. The argument is often made that couture is necessary R. & D. for designers, who then translate the ideas to their ready-to-wear lines, but that's a little like saying that the designers of sport-utility vehicles need to spend a few weeks a year temping at NASA. Still, the effort to find an ongoing rationale for haute couture is strenuously conducted among fashion people in Paris, which makes for a surreal atmosphere. It is as if the directors of the world's opera houses were to gather at La Scala twice a year to hear twenty-minute presentations of every major composer's new operatic work, and those works were then supposed to have something to do with the next Spice Girls record.

DIDIER GRUMBACH has a big idea for how to bridge the Spice Girls/La Scala gap. He wants to make it easier for young designers to work in couture, and he argues that the savoir faire of couture—and the jobs of the *petites mains* who create it—can be preserved only if the current rules segregating couture into an élite, unreachable specialty with rigorous qualifying standards are relaxed. At the moment, the rules demand that to qualify for the title "haute couturier," a designer must employ at least twenty workers, and must present at least fifty outfits per season—conditions that are prohibitively costly for young designers. A second, less demanding category already exists, the *membres invités:* created a year and a half ago, when the recession had decimated the ranks of the grand couturiers, these designers (Jean Paul Gaultier among them) use the artisanal techniques of couture but fail to meet the quotas.

Grumbach would also like to smudge the hard line between couture and ready-to-wear by having couturiers mix some of their ready-to-wear offerings in with the clothes they show during couture week. (Thierry Mugler already does this.) This would liberate young designers who can't produce enough couture designs to merit putting on an entire show. "What will happen is that we will have a new generation of couturiers, as there was in the past, like in 1962, when Saint Laurent and Jean-Louis Scherrer became famous overnight," Grumbach said. "With ready-to-wear, they will make money, and with couture they will make their image."

As is often the way with those who are trying to shake up an institution, Grumbach claims that all he really wants to do is restore an older, better way of doing things. "In 1868, the first professional organization was called La Chambre Syndicale de la Confection *et* de la Couture pour Dames et Fillettes, but in 1910 the couturiers left, and we are still paying for it," he said.



"I'm so hungry I could eat half a sandwich."

The main drawback for Grumbach, and a considerable one, is that the president of the Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode has no real power—that lies where the money is, with the big fashion houses. Inherent institutional impotence did not seem to trouble Grumbach's predecessor, Jacques Mouclier, who is remembered for the pleasure he took in his more ceremonial duties. Mouclier is a fussily mustachioed, exclusively Francophone man who provided the model for the stuffy fashion bureaucrat who choked to death on a piece of ham sandwich in Robert Altman's film "Ready to Wear." "When in doubt, have a cocktail party" is how one editor in Paris describes the federation's policy in the Mouclier years.

But Grumbach's more ambitious agenda will require considerable diplomacy as he deals with the executives of the fashion houses. I asked Pierre Bergé, the contrarian C.E.O. of Yves Saint Laurent, what he thought of the new president's ideas. He grinned meanly. "Didier is a great friend of mine," he said. "I like him very much—but! *But!* I don't understand what he wants to do. For me it is very complicated, and a little bit shifty."

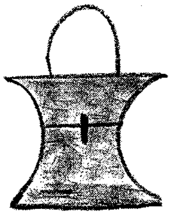
And Daniel Piette, the president of the fashion group at the massive luxury-goods conglomerate Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, was equally skeptical. "I don't have anything against opening up the system," Piette told me, before offering a tortuous analogy revealing precisely how he objected to anything of the sort: "If you drive in Formula One races, there are rules, and you can't pretend to be a Formula One racer if you are not able to make seventy laps of that particular course. I am happy that a fifteen-year-old kid with very little experience in racing be let into Formula One, provided that he can do seventy laps. If he says, 'Look, I am just fifteen years old—you can't expect me to run seventy laps, because I don't have the resistance of the other guys,' I say, 'Forget it, man.' "

Piette made it sound as if Grumbach had his work cut out for him. "We in the fashion houses deliver power to him, and if we don’t deliver he is going to be nobody,” he told me, smiling across acres of marble desk.

FOR all the bluster of the powers at the fashion houses, the arrival of the modest, paper-shuffling Grumbach did seem to have an effect on the mood of the couture shows this past season. His talk of reform, and his plan to encourage younger designers to produce couture collections, has resulted in the idea of craft, as opposed to spectacle, becoming newly fashionable. This is quite a turnaround. In the past several years, the big news in haute couture has been the activities of Bernard Arnault, the head of L.V.M.H., who controversially installed the British designers John Galliano and Alexander McQueen at Dior and Givenchy. The L.V.M.H. model has been to present enormously expensive, outlandish fashion shows featuring enormously expensive, outlandish clothes, in the hope that the publicity generated therewith will accelerate sales of ready-to-wear and perfume.

This model reached its apotheosis in July’s Dior collection. Platform 21 of the Gare D’Austerlitz had been transformed into an Oriental fantasyland, strewn with orange sand and dense with plants; there were barrows piled high with oranges, lemons, and dates, vast dishes of turmeric and coriander, and mountains of vintage Louis Vuitton luggage, happily serving as product placement for another of L.V.M.H.’s lines. The show took place on an uncommonly hot afternoon, and one elderly lady, forced to wait for her seat for an hour, drew a silk scarf out of her handbag, laid it carefully on the ground, and, ignored by Dior staffers, sat down on it with Old World dignity. She was not the kind of guest Dior was trying to impress, coming, as she did, without a full television crew. When it was finally time to show the clothes, they were preceded by a charge of men dressed as Native Americans who banged on drums and whooped in a manner that would get them arrested for bias crime in this country. A steam train, bearing the name “The Diorient Express,” burst from behind a set of curtains over the tracks and spewed forth thirty-three models wearing the most extraordinary clothes this side of an Elton John retrospective: lavishly brocaded tunics over thigh-high embroidered leather boots; vast swirling furs; leather jackets with blouson sleeves slashed into ribbons. The show had its fans (“I *died,*” the fashion sage Polly Mellen said to me afterward), but many felt it was *de trop*, including Suzy Menkes, of the *International Herald Tribune*, whose caustic review the next day was headlined “GALLIANO’S DIORIENT EXPRESS RUNS OUT OF STEAM.”

By contrast, the cool shows this season were those done on a much smaller scale, like that of Josephus Thimister, a thirty-five-year-old Dutch-born designer who left Balenciaga a year and a half ago to start his own company. For his second couture collection, Thimister, who is a *membre invité*, took over a raw space in the Musée de la Mode; he hired a single cellist instead of using a recorded soundtrack, and sent out a column of girls wearing delicate evening dresses made from unfinished couture toile, the rough canvas fabric couturiers use for prototypes before cutting into their pricey silks and brocades. Another much-discussed show, that of Viktor & Rolf, two young Dutch designers of bulbous, massive-shouldered Pierrot outfits featuring built-in party balloons and bunting, didn’t even make it onto the couture calendar, though the international press turned out for it.



Both Thimister and Viktor & Rolf have been canny enough to show during couture week, when there are only a few shows a day, rather than in ready-to-wear, when there can be ten, and Didier Grumbach is eager to point to designers like them as an indication that haute couture can be rejuvenated from the bottom up. “The system was getting a little *désuet*,” he told me. “And today it is the most modern thing. There is a real pleasure to go to Thimister, or to Dominique Sirop”—another new, small couturier—“to have a dress made, at a price which is acceptable.”

Actually, buying such a dress can be a bit more complicated. When I visited Thimister in his apartment near the Invalides the week after the show, he told me that he wasn’t going to be able to produce any of the dresses he had designed. “We could sell thirty pieces a season, but we refuse to, because we don’t have the structure,” he said. Toile dresses were lined up on one side of the living room, and a stuffed tiger and a baby elephant from a famous Saint-Germain taxidermist’s stood on the other; Thimister, a roundish, fluttery man who seemed to be stifling a perpetual giggle, perched on a black velvet couch. “We don’t refuse Ines de la Fressange, or Carole Bouquet, or people like that, but the more general client we refuse,” he said. “For me, prêt-à-porter is much more important than this. This is just fun to do for a few seasons, and then it is finished.” In other words, Thimister’s anti-spectacular presentation was itself just a different kind of spectacle—cleverly capitalizing on the new vogue for the appearance of authenticity and generating buzz for his ready-to-wear line. “Why should everything be commercial?” he asked me, smirking slightly. “We are not *Americans*, are we?” A few weeks later, Thimister told me that the response to the collection had been so overwhelming that he had hired four more employees to try to meet requests for orders, though the structure was all a bit ad hoc. “We will work on it,” he said. “But we can’t say in the future yes or no. We take the risk that we will be able to pay their salaries at the end of the month.”

IT’S common in Paris fashion circles to dismiss the fashion industries of other countries as vastly inferior, their designers nothing more than *stylistes.* This dismissal seems to become more vociferous when those foreign designers generate enormous volume worldwide. When I asked Daniel Piette how designers in other countries manage to be creative without their own culture of haute couture, he said, “As long as fashion has been minimalist, everybody can express himself,” employing the international code word for “Calvin Klein.” “But when minimalism is not fashionable anymore, they will have a bit of a problem expressing themselves.”

Yet there are those in Paris who think that celebrating the peculiar Frenchness of French fashion is outdated. I asked Pierre Bergé whether it would be possible these days to launch a new business the way Saint Laurent and he did when they were young men. “Oh, no, surely not with haute couture,” he said. But, he added, today he wouldn’t want to. “I would like to do an enormous department store,” he said. “I am sure I would convince Yves to do that, with enormous creation in every way—into furniture and everything. That is modern. I am very surprised when I see people who are talented, such as Christian Lacroix, in a couture house at the end of the century. For me, it is completely old-fashioned." The talents he most admires, Bergé said, are those working in a different paradigm, like Terence Conran, the British style mogul. "What we have in France, the *créateurs,* the designers, is one way. But now you have another way, with people such as Miuccia Prada, whom I admire very much," he said. "It is a completely different approach. It is a question of intelligence. And it is a question of marketing. They know what people need, what people want, and they give it to them—Prada, Gucci, Ralph Lauren, even Calvin Klein. They don't pretend to be the new Balenciaga or the new Saint Laurent." Bergé, who has said he will close the Saint Laurent couture department when Yves no longer wishes to design for it, seemed ready to kiss the institution of couture goodbye. "It's the end of an epoch—a done page," he said.

At the very least, the seamstresses demonstrating outside the Yves Saint Laurent show provided one necessary element of every couture season: an opportunity for a round of fashion-industry self-scrutiny: What is haute couture for? Does it need to be for anything? Is it needed, period? It is as if the French felt it was their duty not only to present extraordinary clothes to the world but to provide a twice-yearly existential *crise* as well. And as Didier Grumbach sat in his soon-to-be-renovated office and described his vision, it seemed as if he thought the existential *crise* was part of what he is struggling to preserve.

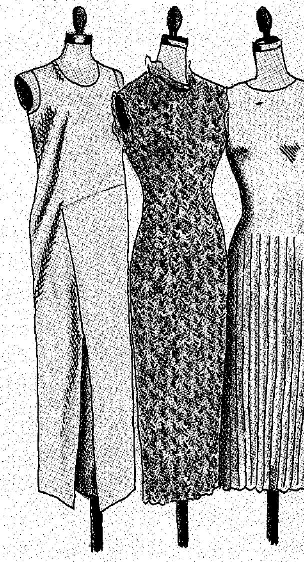
"In Paris, there is a context for a hundred years, and that is what creates the excitement," he said. "We saw it this time with the Gaultier show, and I saw it with Kenzo in 1971, and I have known it so many times with Saint Laurent. Each time, people cry during Saint Laurent's show, and I think that can only happen in Paris. Because in Paris you judge by the creativity, and not by the celebrity. It is not the same attitude as Milan, where people don't cry—they buy." Grumbach paused, as if he were afraid of sounding too sentimental—too swayed by the irrationality of fashion, rather than being convinced of its rationality, as his new job requires him to be. "Well, you can buy *and* cry," he said. ♦

SKETCHBOOK
BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

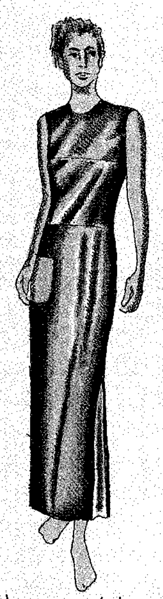
BACKSPRING

Spring will be a little slate this year. And wine. And blue. And green. At Calvin Klein, spring greens have been given names of edibles, like "guava" and "chive," presumably because there are so many ideas to chew over: long dresses layered over more dresses; suits made of cotton scrim; twisted fabrics; shoes balanced on metal spikes. At Nicole Miller, hemlines hover about the ankle. "I didn't like the longer look for fall, but I do for spring," she says. Mark Eisen, however, can live with anything between mid-knee and mid-calf—"It's elongating"—provided there's a geometric touch. "For spring I'm dealing with post-minimalism," he says. If Han Feng is dealing with anything, it's the afterlife. Her candy-colored collection is called Heaven on Earth. Jill Stuart's recent trip to Prague was out of this world enough for her. "I love the national costumes," she says. And, with many peasant skirts now in her line, she could costume a nation of her own. As for Manolo, while concentrating on multilayered chiffon dresses he also worries that his Kuwaiti clientele may be influencing his look. "I've got some things my mother could wear," he says.

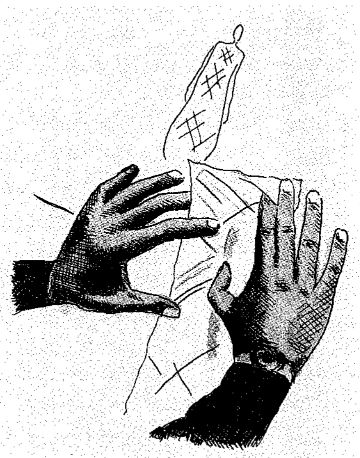
So much for the sights of spring. Now for the rites. Usually, the spring-preview ritual starts with London, Milan, and Paris, and ends with New York, around Halloween. Not so this season. Several New Yorkers (including Donna Karan, who was unavailable for previews) are showing now. The catalyst? The modernist Austrian designer Helmut Lang. Influential, secretive (a pair of pink tights was one of the only indications of his new collection), confrontational (recent advertisements featured a Robert Mapplethorpe photo of a black man's penis), Lang just relocated to New York from Vienna and decided to show this week. Others scrambled to follow. "Americans have been talking about showing first for years, but it took Helmut to make it happen," Patrick McCarthy, the chairman of *Women's Wear Daily,* says. "He just wanted to throw a wrench in the system, but he's changed the whole thing. Donna's furious. It ruined her summer." —M.R.



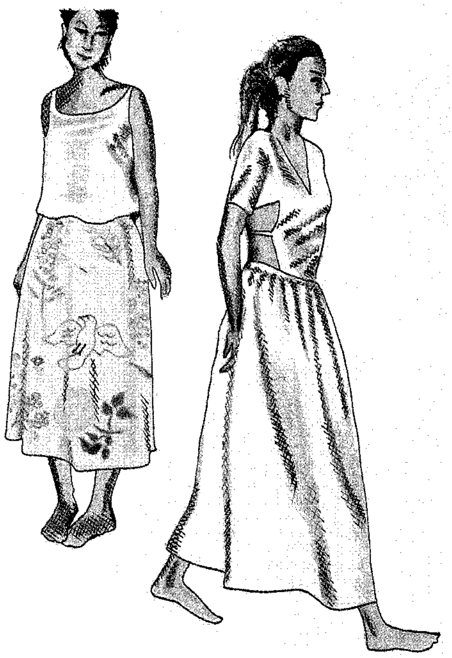
Han Feng's Green Dresses



Ankle Length: Nicole Miller

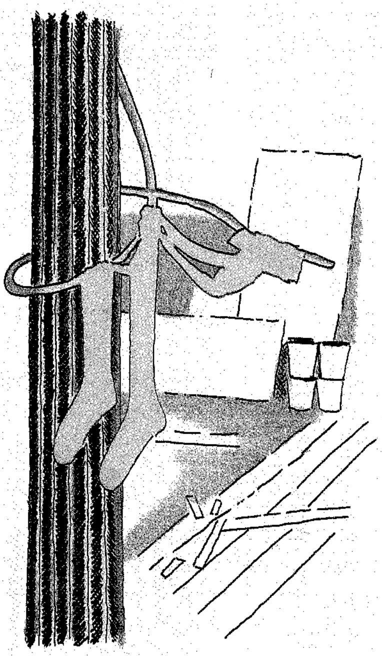


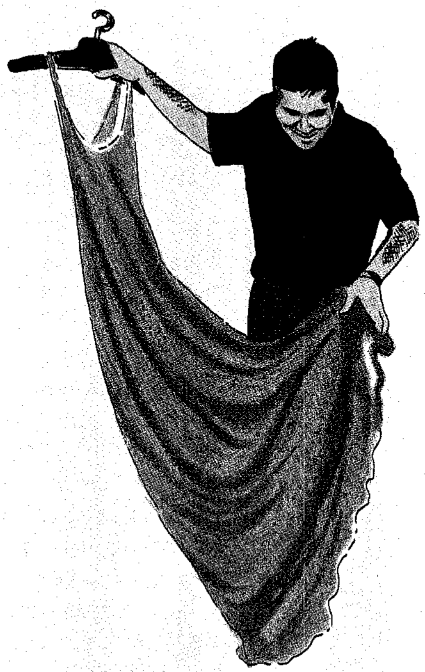
Mark Eisen Toys With A Fabric



FOLKLORIC MOMENTS: JILL STUART

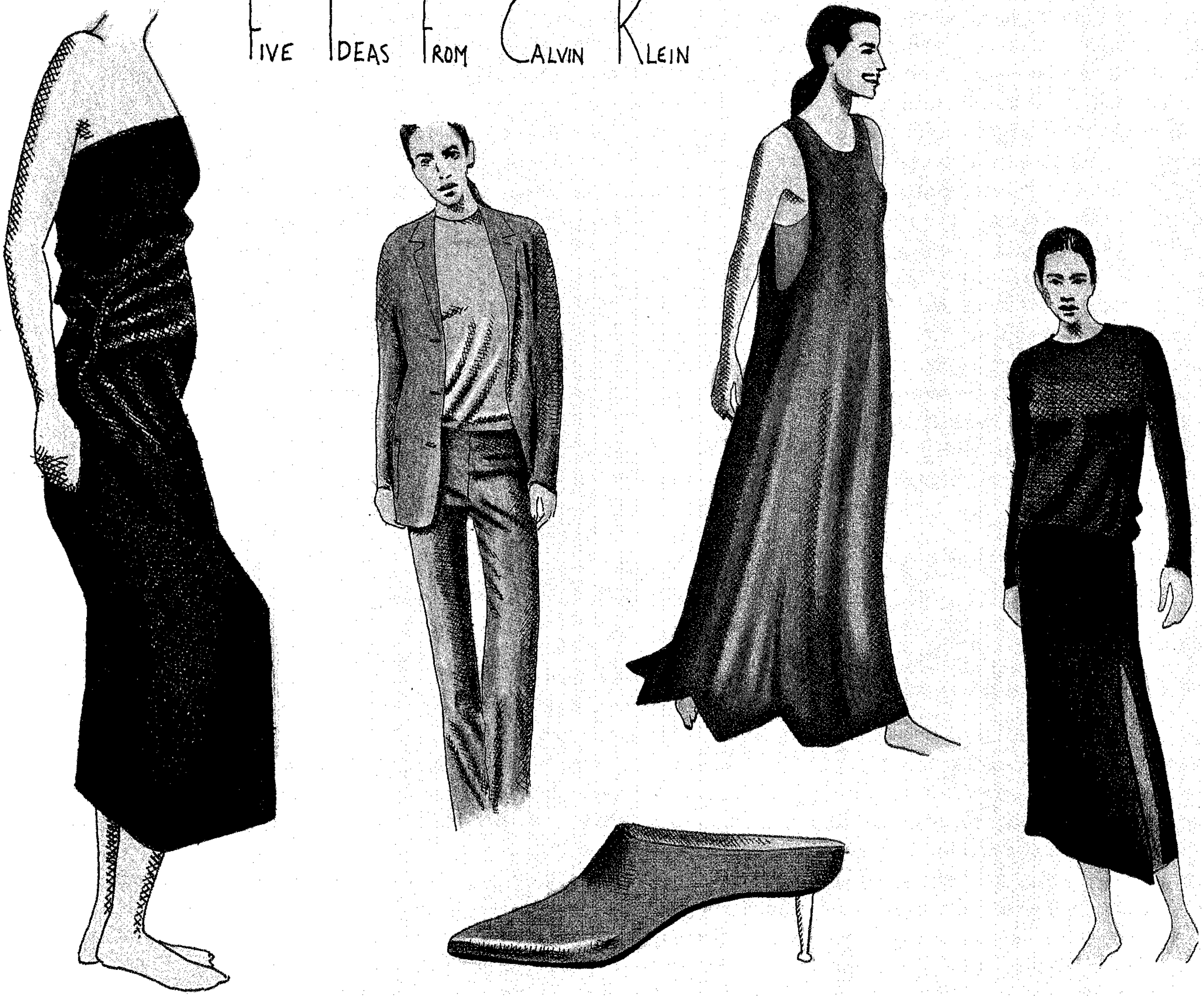
LANG'S UNFINISHED SPACE AND PINK TIGHTS





MANOLO CONSIDERS A CHIFFON CREATION

FIVE IDEAS FROM CALVIN KLEIN

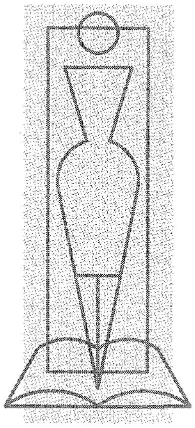


FICTION

A ROOM AT THE NORMANDY

Mrs. Brown meets Mrs. Dalloway in Southern California.

BY MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM



IT is Los Angeles. It is 1949. Laura Brown lays her book face down on her chest and glances at the clock on the nightstand. It's well past seven. She should not be permitting herself to read, not on Dan's birthday. She should be out of bed, showered and dressed, fixing breakfast for Dan and Richie. Still, when she opened her eyes a few minutes ago—when she still half inhabited her dream—she glanced over at this new book on her nightstand and reached for it automatically, as if reading were the singular and obvious first task of the day, the only viable way to negotiate the transit from sleep to obligation. Because she is pregnant, she is allowed these lapses. She is allowed, for now, to read unreasonably, to linger in bed, to cry or grow furious over nothing.

She will make up for breakfast by baking Dan a perfect birthday cake; by ironing the good cloth; by setting a big bouquet of flowers in the middle of the table and surrounding it with gifts.

She will read one more page. Then she'll get out of bed.

> Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.
>
> For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would have to be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

In another world, Laura might have spent her whole life reading. But this is the new world, the rescued world—there's not much room for idleness. So much has been risked and lost: so many have died. Less than five years ago Dan himself was believed to have died, at Anzio. And when he was revealed two days later to be alive after all (he and some poor boy from Arcadia had had the same name), it seemed he had returned from the realm of the dead (the stories you heard then about the mountains of Italy, about Saipan and Okinawa, about Japanese mothers who killed their children and themselves rather than be taken prisoner) and when he came back to California he was received as something more than an ordinary hero. He could have had anyone, any vivacious and compliant girl, but through some obscure and possibly perverse genius had kissed, courted, and proposed to his best friend's older sister, the bookworm with the dark, close-set eyes and the Roman nose, who had never been sought after or cherished; who had always been left alone, to read. What could she say but yes? How could she deny a handsome, goodhearted, sweet-tempered boy, practically a member of the family, who had come back from the dead? She married him out of love. She married him out of guilt; out of fear of being alone; out of patriotism. He had suffered so much. He wanted her.

So now she is Laura Brown. Laura Zielski, the solitary girl, the incessant reader, is gone, and here in her place is Laura Brown.

Summoning resolve, as if she were about to dive into cold water, Laura closes the book and lays it on the nightstand. She will rise and be cheerful. At least, she thinks, she does not read mysteries and romances. Right now she is reading all of Virginia Woolf, book by book—she is fascinated by the idea of a woman like that, a woman of such brilliance, such strangeness, such immeasurable sorrow; a woman who had genius but still filled her pockets with stones and waded out into a river. She, Laura, likes to imagine that she has a touch of brilliance herself, just a hint of it, though she suspects most people walk around with similar hopeful ideas, never divulged. She wonders, while she pushes a cart through the supermarket or has her hair done, if the other women aren't all thinking, to some degree or other, the same thing: Here is the brilliant spirit, the woman of sorrows, the woman of transcendent joys, who would rather be elsewhere, but who has consented to perform simple and essentially foolish tasks, to examine tomatoes, to sit under a hair dryer, because it is her art and her duty. Because the War is over, the world has survived, and we are here, all of us, making homes, having and raising children, creating not just books or paintings but a whole world—a world of order and harmony where children are safe and where men who have known deprivation and fear, who have acted bravely and well, come home to lighted windows, to perfume, to plates and napkins.

LAURA'S husband has made the coffee, poured cereal for himself and their three-year-old son.

"Good morning," he says, raising his eyebrows as if he is surprised but delighted to see her.

"You should have woken me. Really."

He looks at Richie, lifts his brows another centimeter, so that his forehead is creased and his lustrous black hair twitches slightly. "We thought it'd be better if you slept in a little, didn't we?" he says.

Richie, three years old, says, "Yes." He nods avidly.

Laura reaches into the pocket of her robe for a cigarette, changes her mind, raises her hand instead to her hair. It is almost perfect, it is almost enough, to be a young mother in a yellow kitchen, touching her thick, dark hair, pregnant with another child. There are leaf shadows on the curtains; there is fresh coffee.

"G'morning, Bug," she says to Richie.

"I'm having cereal," he says. He grins. It could be said that he leers. He is transparently smitten with her. He makes her think sometimes of a mouse singing amorous ballads under the window of a giantess.

ANDERS WENNGREN

"Good," she answers. "That's very good."

He nods again, as if they share a secret.

"But honestly," she says to her husband.

"Why should I wake you?" he answers. "Why shouldn't you sleep?"

"It's your birthday," she says.

"You need to rest."

He pats her belly carefully but with a certain force. Nothing shows yet; the only manifestations are an occasional squeamishness and a subtle but distinct inner churning. Laura and her husband and son are in a house in which no one but they have ever lived. Outside the house is a world where the shelves are stocked, where radio waves are full of music, where young men can walk the streets again, men who have willingly given up their early twenties and now, thinking of thirty and beyond, haven't any more time to spare. Their wartime training stands them in good stead. They are lean and strong. They are up at sunrise, uncomplaining.

"I like to make your breakfast," Laura says. "I feel fine."

Laura is three years older than Dan (there is something vaguely disreputable about this); a broad-shouldered woman, angular, dark, foreign-looking, although her family has been failing to prosper in this country for over a hundred years.

She pours herself a cup of the coffee he's made. She comes back to him with the steaming cup in her hand, kisses his cheek. He pats her rump, affectionately but absent-mindedly. He is no longer thinking of her. He is thinking about the day ahead, the drive downtown, the torpid golden quiet of Wilshire Boulevard, where all the stores are still locked up and only the most cheerful and dedicated figures, young early risers like himself, move through sunlight still pure before the smog. His office will be silent, the typewriters in the secretarial pool still shrouded, and he and a few of the other men his age will have a full hour or more to get caught up on paperwork before the phones start ringing.

He stands. For a while they are all absorbed in the ritual of his leaving: the taking on of jacket and briefcase; the flurry of kisses; the waves, he from over his shoulder as he crosses the lawn to the car, Laura and Richie from behind the screen door. Together they stand like spectators at a parade as he pilots the ice-blue Chevrolet down the short driveway and into the street. He waves one last time, jauntily, from behind the wheel.

"Well, now," she says, after the car has disappeared. Her son watches her adoringly, expectantly. When her husband is present, she is more nervous but less afraid. She can see Dan seeing her, and she knows almost instinctively how to treat the boy: firmly but kindly, with an affectionate maternal offhandedness that seems effortless. Alone with the child, though, she can't always remember how a mother should act.

They return to the kitchen. The boy sets about eating with a tractorish steadiness that has more to do with obedience than with appetite. Laura pours herself a fresh cup of coffee, sits at the table, and lights a cigarette.

She says to Richie, "Guess what we're going to do today. We're going to make a cake for your father's birthday."

He nods gravely, judiciously. He seems unconvinced about something.

"We're going to make him the best cake he's ever seen. The very best. Don't you think that's a good idea?"

THE cake is less than she'd hoped it would be. She tries not to mind. There's nothing really wrong with it, but she'd imagined something more. It looks amateurish; handmade. She tells herself, It's fine. It's a fine cake, Dan will love it. Its clumsy aspects are part of its charm.

She will now make the beds, vacuum the rugs. She will wrap the presents she's bought for her husband: a necktie and a new shirt, both more expensive and elegant than the ones he buys for himself; a boar-bristle brush; and a small pungent leather case that contains nail clippers, a nail file, and tweezers, for him to take with him when he travels, as he does occasionally, for the agency. He will be happy with all these gifts, or appear to be happy; he will whistle and say "Get a load of this" when he sees the expensive shirt and tie. He will kiss her, enthusiastically, with each present, and tell her she's done too much, she shouldn't have, he doesn't deserve such fine things.

Why, she wonders, does it seem that she could give him anything, anything at all, and receive essentially the same response? Why does he desire nothing, really, beyond what he's already got? He is impenetrable in his ambitions and satisfactions, his love of job and home. This, she reminds herself, is a virtue. It is part of his loveliness. It is good, she reminds herself—it is lovely—that her husband cannot be touched by ephemera; that his happiness depends only on the fact of her, here in the house, living her life, thinking of him.

Someone taps at the back door. Laura, washing the last of the dishes, can see the faint outline of Kitty through the filmy white curtain. There is the vague halo of Kitty's brown-blond hair, the scrubbed pink blur of her face. Laura feels something stronger than excitement, something that resembles panic. Her hair is hardly brushed; she is still wearing her bathrobe. She wants to rush to the door and she wants to stand here, immobile, at the sink, until Kitty gives up and goes away. She might actually have done it, stood motionless, holding her breath (can Kitty see inside, would she know?), but there is the problem of Richie, witness to everything, running now into the kitchen, holding a red plastic truck, shouting with a mix of delight and alarm that someone's at the door.

Laura dries her hands on a dish towel covered with red roosters, and opens the door. It's only Kitty, she tells herself: her friend from two doors down.

"Am I interrupting anything?" Kitty asks.

"Of course not. Come on in."

Kitty enters, bringing with her an aura of cleanliness and a whole vocabulary of avid, nervy movements. She is an attractive, robust, fleshy, large-headed woman several years younger than Laura (it seems that everyone, suddenly, is at least slightly younger than she). In school she was one of several authoritative, aggressive, not quite beautiful girls so potent in their money and their athletic confidence they simply insisted that the local notion of desirability be reconfigured to include them. Kitty and her friends—steady, stolid, firm-featured, large-spirited, capable of deep loyalties and terrible cruelties—were the queens of the various festivals, the cheerleaders, the stars of the plays.

"I need a favor," Kitty says.

"Sure," Laura says. "Can you sit a minute?"

"Mm-hm." Kitty sits at the kitchen table. She says a friendly, slightly dismissive hello to the little boy. With no children of her own yet (people are starting to wonder), she does not attempt to seduce the children of others. They can come to her, if they like; she will not go to them.

Laura pours a cup of coffee for Kitty, and one for herself. She glances nervously at the cake, wishing she could hide it. There are crumbs caught in the icing. The "n" in "Dan" is squashed against a rose.

Following Laura's eyes, Kitty says, "Oh, look, you made a cake."

"It's Dan's birthday."

Kitty gets up, comes and stands beside Laura. She wears a white short-sleeved blouse, green plaid shorts, and straw sandals that make a small, crisp sound when she walks.

"One of my maiden attempts," Laura says. "It's harder than you'd think, writing in frosting."

She hopes she sounds careless, debonair, charmingly unconcerned.

"It's cute," Kitty says, conveying to her that it is sweet and touching in its heartfelt, agonizingly sincere discrepancy between ambition and facility.

They both know how relentlessly Kitty would have snubbed her in high school, had they been the same age. In another life, not very much unlike this one, they'd have been enemies, but now Laura is married to a celebrated boy, a war hero, from Kitty's graduating class and has joined the aristocracy in much the way a homely German princess, no longer young, might find herself seated on a throne beside an English king.

What surprises her—what occasionally horrifies her—is how much she revels in Kitty's friendship. Kitty is precious, just as Laura's husband is lovely. Kitty's preciousness, the sense of enlarged moment she brings to a room, is like that of a movie star. She has a movie star's singularity, a movie star's flawed and idiosyncratic beauty; like a movie star she seems both common and heightened, in the way of Olivia de Havilland or Barbara Stanwyck. She is deeply, almost profoundly, popular.

"How's Ray?" Laura asks as she sets a cup in front of Kitty. "I haven't seen him in a while."

Kitty's husband is Laura's chance to right the balance between them. Ray was Kitty's high-school boyfriend. He played center on the basketball team, and went on to do well but not spectacularly at U.S.C. He spent seven months as a prisoner of war in the Philippines. He is now some sort of mysterious functionary in the Department of Water and Power, and already, at thirty, is beginning to demonstrate how heroic boys can, by infinitesimal degrees, for no visible reasons, metamorphose into middle-aged drubs. Ray—crewcut, reliable, myopic—is full of liquids. He sweats copiously. Small bubbles of clear spit form at the sides of his mouth whenever he speaks at length. Laura imagines (it's impossible not to) that when he and Kitty make love he must spurt rivers. Why, then, are there still no children?

"He's fine," Kitty says. "He's Ray. He's the same."

"Dan, too," Laura says kindly, emphatically. "These guys are something, aren't they?"

Laura and Kitty, at this moment, could be high-school girls, best friends, complaining about boys who will soon be replaced by other boys. Kitty seems, briefly, like a simple, ordinary woman seated at a kitchen table. Her magic evaporates; it is possible to see how she'll be at fifty—fat, mannish, leathery, wry and ironic about her marriage, one of those women of whom people say, "She used to be quite pretty, you know." The world is already, subtly, beginning to leave her behind.

"So," Laura says to Kitty. She is surprised at the power in her own voice, the hint of steel.

"Well," Kitty says. "I have to go into the hospital for a couple of days."

"What's the matter?"

"They don't know, exactly. I have some kind of growth."

"My lord."

"It's in, you know. My insides. My uterus. They're going to go in and have a look."

"When?"

"This afternoon. Dr. Moore said sooner's better than later. I need you to feed the dog."

"Of course. What did the doctor say, exactly?"

"Just that there's something there, and they need to find out what. It's probably—what the trouble's been. About getting pregnant."

"Well," Laura says. "Then they can get rid of it."

"He says they have to see. He says there's no point in worrying, not at all, but that they have to see."

Laura watches Kitty, who does not move or speak or cry.

"It'll be all right," Laura says.

"Yes. Probably it will. I'm not worried. What would be the point of worrying?"

Laura is filled with tenderness. Laura has always imagined, as have most others, that Ray is the problem—Ray with his obscure job in a municipal office; his bubbles of spit; his bow ties; his bourbon. She knows, or believes she knows, that there is in fact something to worry about. She sees that Kitty and Ray, their trim little house, have been invaded by misfortune; they are half devoured by it.

"Come here," Laura says, as she would say to her child, and as if Kitty were her child Laura doesn't wait for her to obey but goes to her. She takes Kitty's shoulders in her hands and, after an awkward moment, embraces her.

Kitty hesitates, then lets herself be held. She surrenders. She does not cry. Laura can feel the relinquishment; she can feel Kitty give herself over. She thinks, This is how a man feels, holding a woman.

Kitty snakes her arms around Laura's waist. Laura is flooded with feeling. Here, right here in her arms, are Kitty's fear and courage, Kitty's illness. Here are her breasts. Here is the stout, practical heart that beats beneath; here is the untouchable essence that a man (Ray, of all people!) dreams of, yearns toward, searches for so desperately at night. Here it is, in daylight, in Laura's arms. Without quite meaning to, without deciding to, she kisses Kitty, lingeringly, on the top of her forehead. She is full of Kitty's perfume and the crisp, clean essence of Kitty's brown-blond hair.

"I'm fine," Kitty whispers. "Really."

"I know you are," Laura answers.

"If anything, I'm worried about Ray. He doesn't actually manage all that well, not with something like this."

"Forget about Ray for a minute," Laura says. "Just forget about him."

Kitty lifts her face, and their lips touch. They both know what they are doing. They rest their mouths, each on the other. They touch their lips together, but do not quite kiss.

It is Kitty who pulls away.

"You're sweet," she says.

Laura steps back. She has gone too far, they've both gone too far, but it is Kitty who's pulled away first. It is Kitty whose fears have briefly propelled her to act desperately. Laura is the dark-eyed predator, the odd one, the foreigner, the one who can't be trusted. Laura and Kitty agree, silently, that this is true.

Laura glances over at Richie. He is still holding the red truck, and he is watching.

"Please don't worry," Laura says to Kitty. "You'll be fine."

Kitty stands, gracefully, without haste. "You know the routine, right? Just give him half a can in the evening, and check his water every now and then. Ray can feed him in the morning."

"Is Ray driving you to the hospital?"

"Mm-hm."

"Don't worry. I'll take care of things here."

"Thank you."

Kitty looks briefly around the room with an expression of weary approval, as if she had decided, somewhat against her better judgment, to buy this house after all, and see what she can do about fixing it up.

"Bye," she says.

"I'll call you tomorrow, at the hospital."

"O.K."

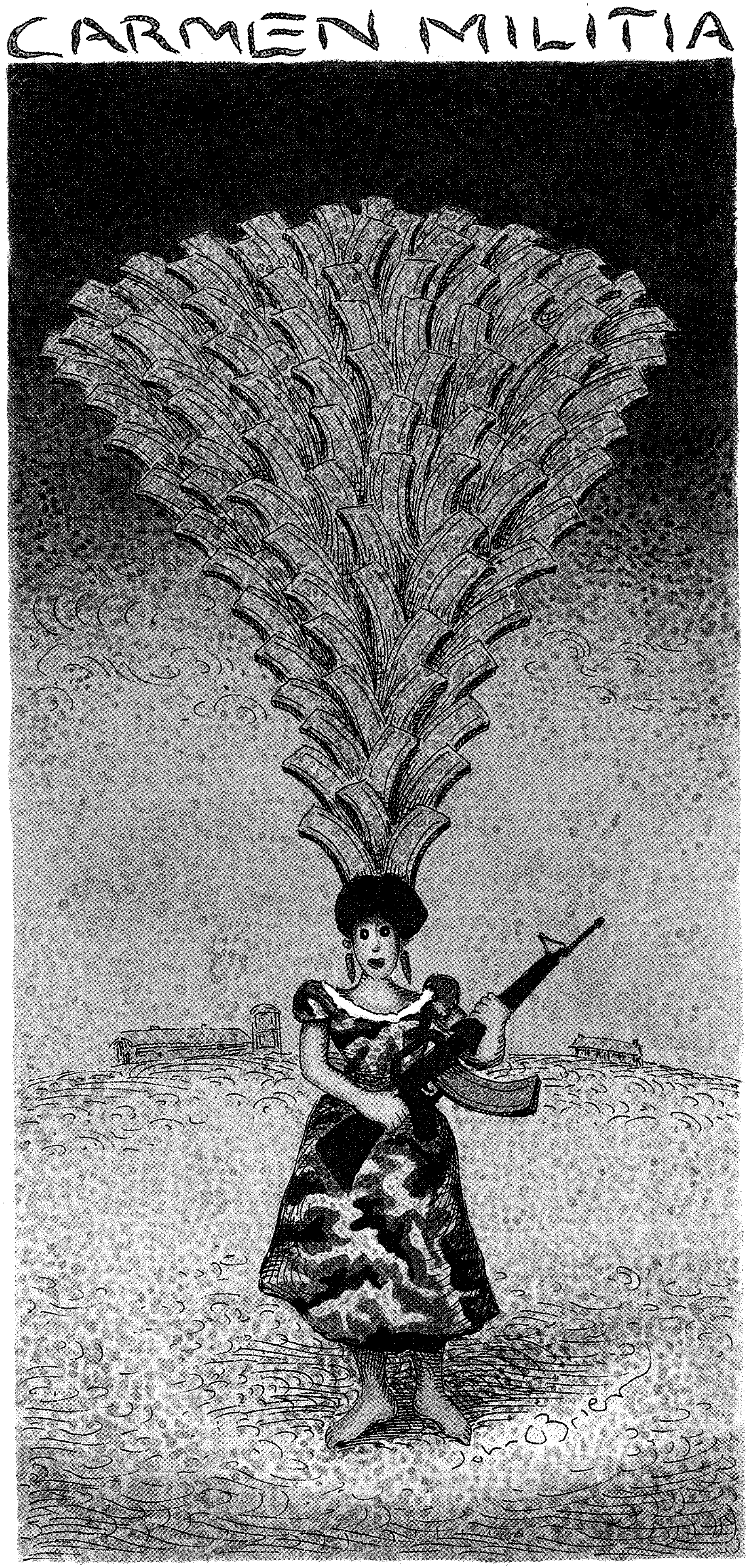
With a reluctant smile, a small compression of her lips, Kitty turns and leaves.

Laura faces her little boy, who stares at her nervously, adoringly. She wants more than anything to return to her bed and her book. But, instead, she leads her son back into the living room, to his tower of colored wooden blocks. Once he is settled she returns to the kitchen and, without hesitation, picks up the cake and tips it from its milk-glass platter into the garbage can. It lands with a surprisingly solid sound; a yellow rose is smeared along the can's plastic liner. She can start over now. According to the clock on the wall, it is barely ten-thirty. She has plenty of time to make another cake.

As Laura pilots her Chevrolet along the Pasadena Freeway, among hills still scorched in places from last year's fire, she feels as if she's dreaming or, more precisely, as if she's remembering this drive from a dream long ago. She has left her son with Mrs. Latch down the street. She has claimed a last-minute errand related to her husband's birthday.

She panicked—she supposes "panic" is the word for it. She tried to lie down for a few minutes while her son was napping; she tried to read a little, but couldn't concentrate. She lay on the bed with the book in her hands, feeling emptied, exhausted, by the child, the cake, the kiss. And as she lay on the double bed with the shades drawn and the bedside lamp lit, trying to read, she wondered, Is this what it's like to go crazy?

And so she's left for a few hours. She



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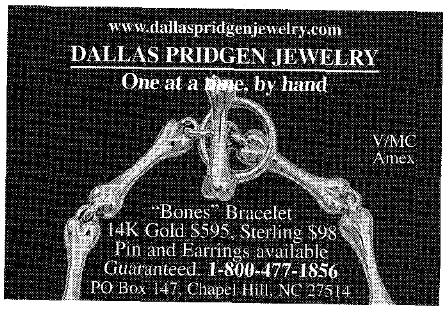
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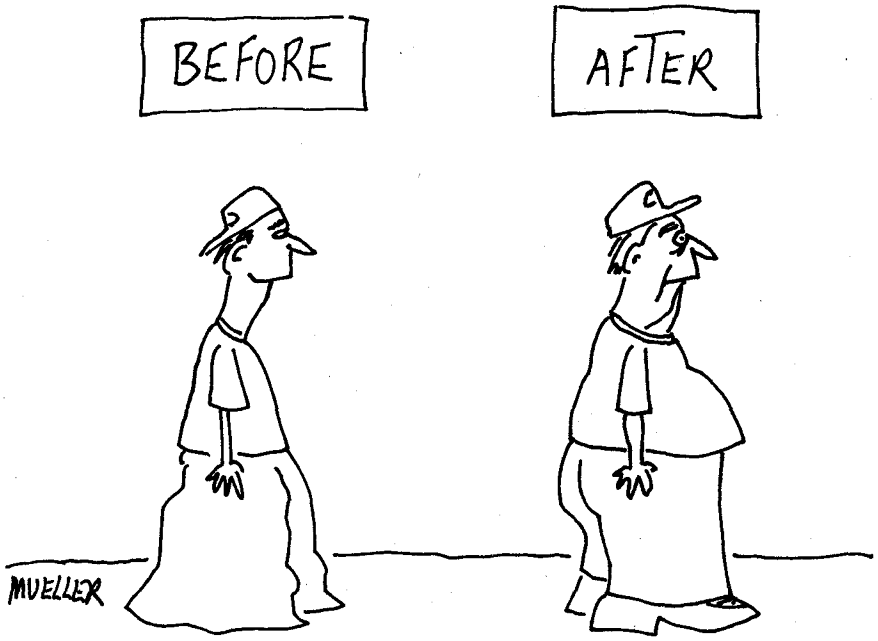

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has not acted irresponsibly. She's made sure her son is taken care of. She's baked a new cake, thawed the steaks, topped the beans. Having done all that, she's permitting herself to leave. She will be home in time to cook the dinner, to feed Kitty's dog. But now, right now, she is going somewhere (where?) to be alone. She has taken her pocketbook, and her copy of "Mrs. Dalloway." She has put on hose and a blouse and skirt; she has clipped her favorite earrings, simple copper disks, onto her ears. She feels faintly, foolishly satisfied by her outfit.

At home, the new cake waits under an aluminum cake-saver with a wooden knob shaped like an acorn. It says "Happy Birthday Dan" in elegant white script, uncrowded by the clusters of yellow roses.

She touches her lips, where Kitty's kiss briefly resided. She doesn't mind too much about the kiss, what it does and does not imply, except that it gives Kitty an edge. Laura desires Kitty. She desires her force, her brisk and cheerful disappointment, the shifting pink-gold lights of her secret self and the crisp, shampooed depths of her hair. Laura desires Dan, too, in a darker and less exquisite way. Still it is desire, sharp as a bone chip. She can kiss Kitty in the kitchen and love her husband, too. She can anticipate the queasy pleasure of her husband's lips and fingers (is it that she desires his desire?) and still dream of kissing Kitty again someday, in a kitchen or at the beach as children shriek in the surf, in a hallway with their arms full of folded towels, laughing softly, aroused, hopeless, in love with their own recklessness if not each other, saying "Sh-h-h," parting quickly, going on.

Something, she thinks, is wrong with her.

She shifts over to the left-hand lane, presses the accelerator. For now, right now, she could be anyone, going anywhere. She has a full tank of gas, money, a checkbook. For an hour or two, she can go wherever she likes.

When she tops the rise at Chavez Ravine, and the hazy spires of downtown L.A. appear, she has to make a choice. She must either enter it, by way of the left-hand lane, or switch to the right-hand lane and bypass it altogether. It would be possible to veer right, and find her way eventually to Beverly Hills, or to the beach at Santa Monica, but she doesn't want to shop and she hasn't brought anything for the beach. What she wants—someplace private, silent, where she can read, where she can think—is not readily available. If she goes to a store or restaurant, she'll have to perform—she'll have to pretend to need or want something. She'll have to examine merchandise or sit at a table, order something, consume it, and leave. And if she just parks her car somewhere and sits, she'll be too exposed; she'll look too peculiar. She pilots her car into the left-hand lane, and drives into the city. She will check into a hotel. As long as she pays for the room, what's wrong with using it for only a couple of hours? Yes, it's wasteful, but money isn't tight right now, and she runs the household with relative thrift. How much can a room cost, really? It can't be that much.

She drives to the Normandy, a sprawling white hotel just a few blocks away. It is large, clean, unremarkable, V-shaped—twin white ten-story wings that enclose a fountained, urban garden. It has an air of sanitized respectability. Laura pulls her car up under the chrome canopy. Although it is full daylight, the air under the canopy has a slightly nocturnal quality, a lunar brilliance; a scoured white-on-white clarity. The potted aloe plants on either side of the black glass doors seem astonished to be there.

She leaves her car with the attendant, accepts the ticket, and enters through the heavy glass doors. The lobby is hushed, gelid. Laura is at once comforted and unnerved. The transaction at the front desk proves surprisingly easy. The clerk, a man about her own age, has a sweet, reedy voice and ravaged skin. When Laura asks, "Have you got a room available?," he answers unhesitatingly, "Yes, we do. Do you need a single or a double?"

"A double," she says. "For my husband and myself. He's coming, with our luggage, in an hour or two."

Laura signs the registration form with her own name (an invented one would feel too strange, too sordid), pays now ("We may be leaving very early in the morning"), and receives the key.

Leaving the desk, she can hardly believe she's done it. She has got the key, passed through the portals. She sees, behind glass, the interior grotto of a combination drugstore and coffee shop, where several solitary men in suits sit with newspapers at the counter, and where an almost cartoonishly large lemon-meringue pie, with two slices missing, stands on a pedestal under a clear plastic dome.

She rings for the elevator, presses the button for her floor, walks calmly down the hall, and fits the key into the lock of Room 219: a turquoise room, not surprising or unusual in any way, with a turquoise spread on the double bed and a painting (Paris, springtime) in a blond wood frame. She goes to the window, parts the filmy white curtains, raises the blinds. She takes off her shoes and lies on the bed. She reaches for her book. She has marked her place with the silver bookmark ("To My Bookworm, With Love") Dan gave her last Christmas.

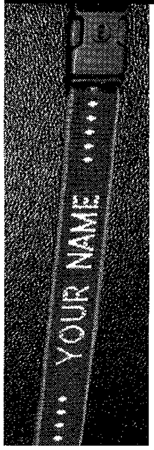
It seems, somehow, that she has left her own world and entered the realm of the book. Nothing, of course, could be further from Mrs. Dalloway's London than this turquoise hotel room, and yet she imagines that Virginia Woolf herself, the drowned woman, the genius, might in death inhabit a place not unlike this one. She laughs, quietly, to herself. Please, God, she says silently, let heaven be something better than a room at the Normandy. Heaven would be better furnished, it would be brighter and grander, but it might in fact contain some measure of this hushed remove. Having this room to herself seems both prim and whorish. She is safe here. She could do anything she wanted to, anything at all. She is somehow like a newlywed, reclining in her chamber, waiting for . . . not her husband, or any other man. For someone. For something.

She could decide to die here, she thinks. It is a reckless, vertiginous thought, slightly disembodied, not particularly morbid. To say to them all, I couldn't manage, you had no idea.

But it would be evil. Nothing she might do as a living wife and mother, no lapse, no fit of rage or depression, could possibly compare.

SHE is later than she'd meant to be, but not seriously late; not so late as to need an explanation. It is almost six. She has got halfway through the book. Now she is herself and not herself. She is a woman in London, an aristocrat, pale and charming, a little false. And she is this other, inchoate thing: a wife, a mother, a driver, a friend of Kitty (whom she's kissed, who may be dying), a pair of hands with coral-colored fingernails (one chipped) and a diamond wedding band gripping the wheel of a Chevrolet as a pale-blue Plymouth taps its brake lights ahead of her, as late-afternoon summer sun assumes its golden depths.

She pulls up in front of Mrs. Latch's house, where two painted plaster squirrels are attached to the gable over the garage. She gets out of her car and stands for a moment, looking up at the plaster squirrels, still holding her car keys. Beside her, the car emits a peculiar ticking sound (it's been doing this for several days now, she'll have to take it by the



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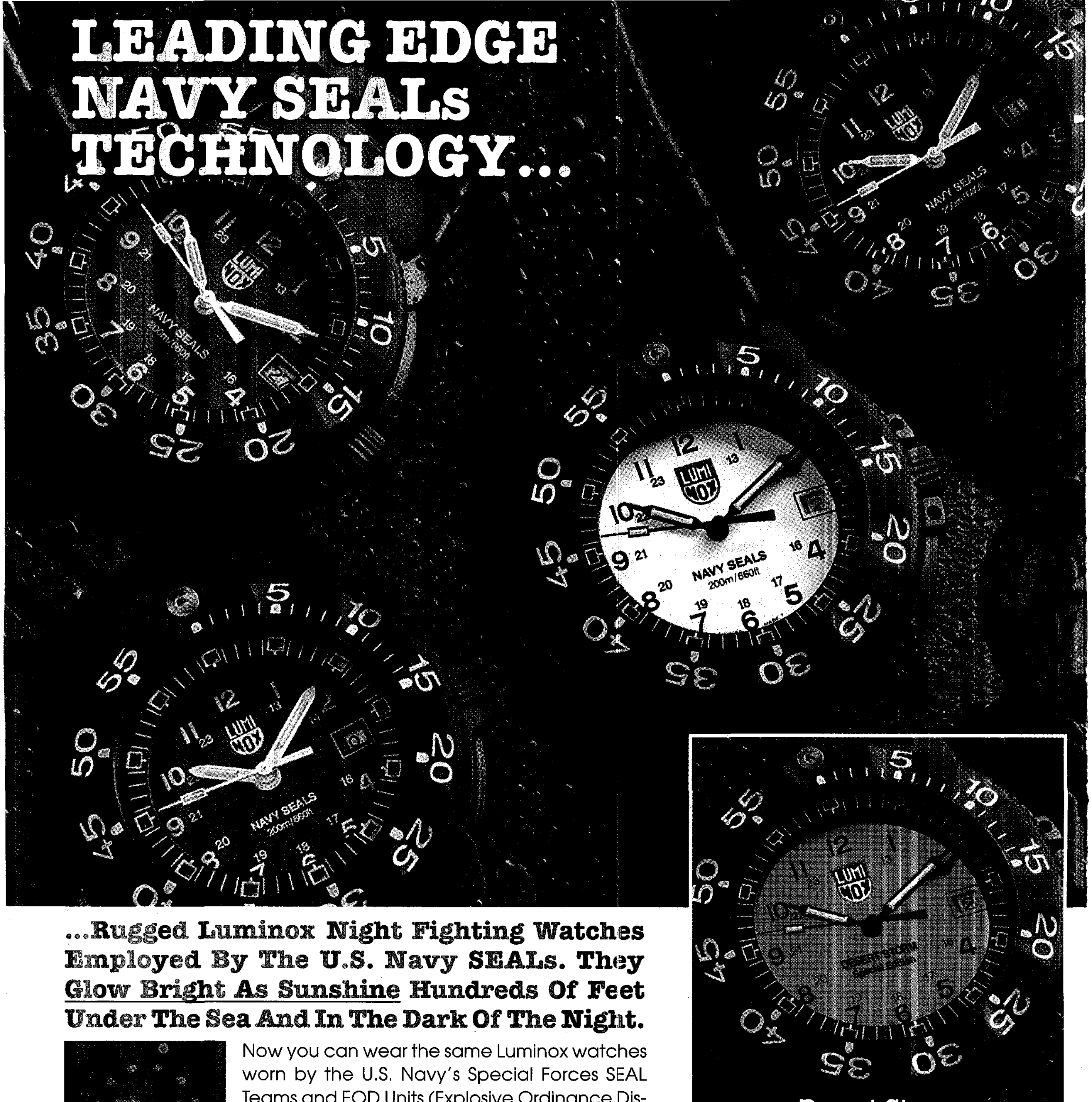

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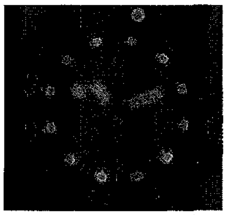

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mechanic's). It seems, briefly, that by going to the hotel she has slipped out of her life. It's the secrecy, she tells herself; it's the strangeness of what she's just done, though there's no real harm in it, is there? She simply went away for a few hours, read her book, and came back. It's a secret only because she can't quite think how she'd explain, well, any of it.

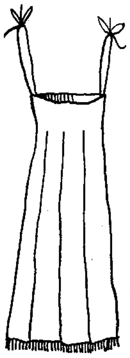
She stands, holding her car keys and her purse, staring at Mrs. Latch's garage. The door, painted white, has a little green-shuttered window in it, as if the garage were a miniature house attached to the larger house. Laura's breathing is suddenly labored. She's slightly dizzy—it seems she might stumble and collapse onto Mrs. Latch's smooth concrete drive. She considers getting back into her car, and driving away again. She forces herself to go forward. She reminds herself: she has to retrieve her child, take him home, and finish assembling her husband's birthday dinner. She has to do those ordinary things.

She draws another breath. She rings Mrs. Latch's rectangular, illuminated doorbell, which glows orange in the late-afternoon sun.

Mrs. Latch opens the door almost immediately, as if she'd been standing right there, waiting. She is florid, huge-hipped in Bermuda shorts, overly kind; her house is full of a rich brown smell, some sort of meat roasting.

"Well, hello," she says.

"Hi," Laura answers. "Sorry I'm late."



"Not at all. We've been having a fine time. Come on in."

Richie rushes in from the living room. He is flushed, alarmed, all but overwhelmed by relief. He breaks into tears.

"Oh, now," Laura says, picking him up. She inhales his smell, the deep essence of him, a profound cleanliness, undefinable. Holding him, inhaling, she feels better.

"He's glad to see you," Mrs. Latch says with elaborately hearty, bitter good cheer. Had she imagined she was some kind of treat for him, a favorite, and her house a house of marvels? Yes, she probably had.

"Hey there, Bug," Laura says, close to her son's small pink ear. She is proud of her maternal calm, her claim on the boy. She is embarrassed by his tears. Do people think she's overprotective? Why does he do this so often?

"Did you have fun?" Laura asks. "Were you good?"

He nods.

"Did you miss me?"

"Yes!" he says.

"Well, I had a lot to do," Laura says.

She pays Mrs. Latch, accepts a bird of paradise from her yard. Mrs. Latch always offers something—a flower, cookies—as if that were the object of payment, and the babysitting were free.

Once they are out of the driveway, Laura says to Richie, "Boy oh boy, we're in trouble now. We've got to race right home and get that dinner started. We should have been there an hour ago."

He nods solemnly. The weight of life reasserts itself; the nowhere feeling vanishes. This moment, now, midblock, as the car approaches a stop sign, is unexpectedly large and still, serene—Laura enters it the way she might enter a church from a noisy street. On either side, sprinklers throw brilliant cones of mist up over the lawns. Late sun gilds an aluminum carport.

Richie doesn't speak. He watches her. Laura brakes for the stop sign, then accelerates through the intersection. She drives carefully, with both hands precisely centered on the wheel.

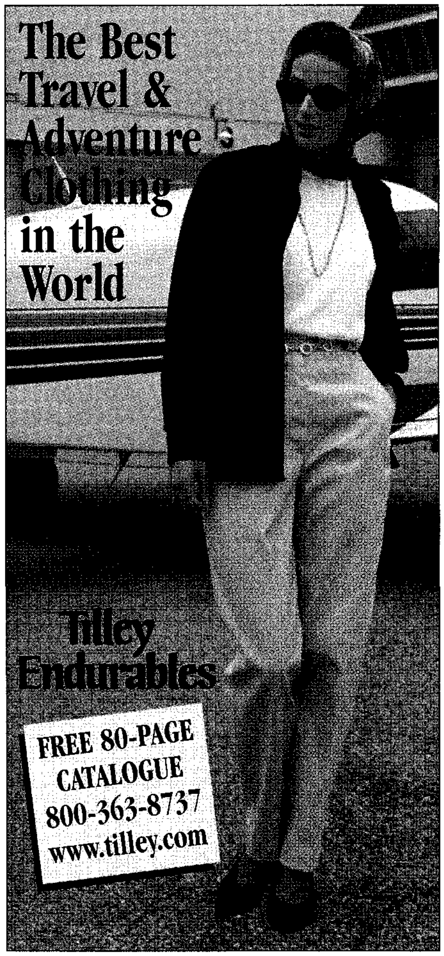
"What's wrong?" she asks.

He knows—or he suspects—something. He must know. He watches her constantly, spends almost every waking hour in her presence. He's seen her with Kitty. He's watched her make a second cake, and bury the first one under other garbage in the can beside the garage. He is devoted, entirely, to the observation and deciphering of her, because without her there is no world at all.

Of course, he would know when she's lying. She says, "Don't worry, honey. Everything's fine. We're going to have a wonderful party for Daddy's birthday tonight. Do you know how happy he'll be? We've got all these presents for him. We've made him such a nice cake."

Richie nods, unblinking. He rocks gently back and forth. Quietly he says, "Yes, we made him a nice cake." There is a surprisingly mature hollowness in his voice.

"I love you, sweetheart," she says. "You're



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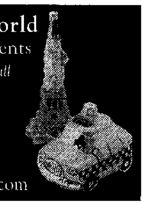

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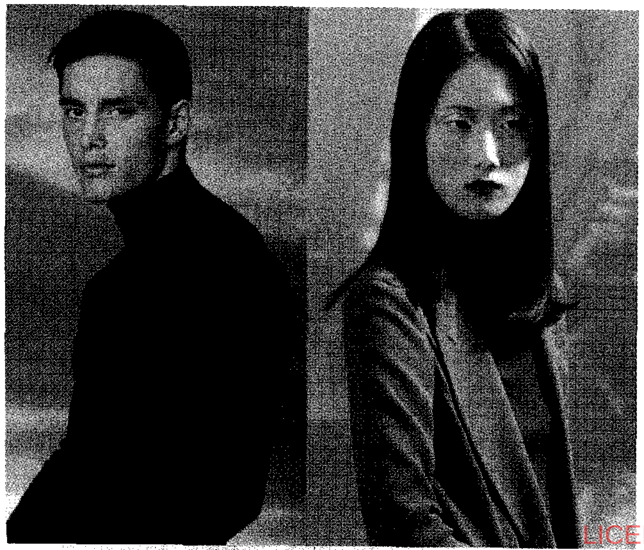

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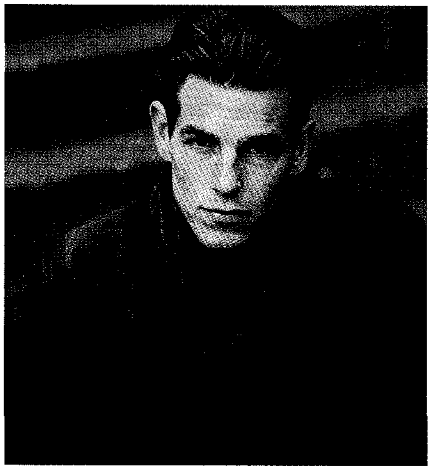
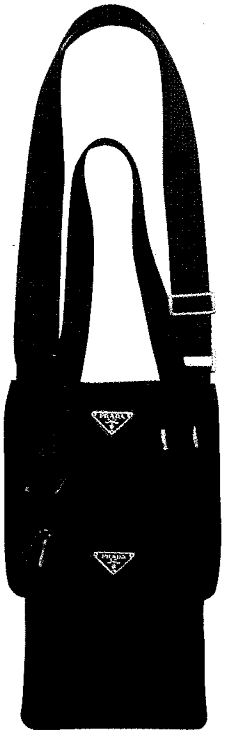
STYLE CALENDAR
(continued on next page)

STYLE CALENDAR

(continued from previous page)

NAUTICA BY DAVID CHU. This rugged, black leather Nautica parka is a must-have for fall. At $480, this luxurious jacket is part of the complete Nautica collection found at department and specialty stores nationwide.





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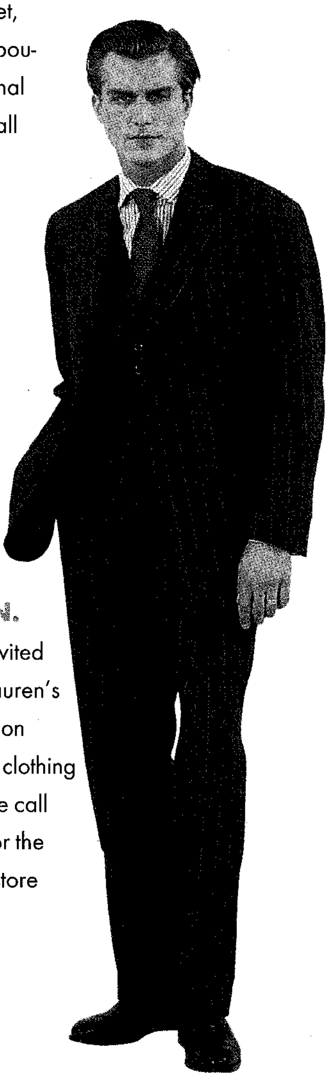

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my guy." Laura remembers to smile. She keeps both hands on the wheel.

THE candles are lit. The song is sung. Dan, blowing them out, sprays a few tiny droplets of clear spittle onto the icing's smooth surface. Laura applauds and, after a moment, Richie does, too.

"Happy birthday, darling," she says.

A spasm of fury rises unexpectedly, catches in her throat. He is coarse, gross, stupid; he has sprayed spit onto the cake. She herself is trapped here forever, posing as a wife. She must get through this night, and then tomorrow morning, and then another night here, in these rooms, with nowhere else to go. She must please; she must continue.

The anger passes. It's all right, she tells herself. It's all right. Pull yourself together, for heaven's sake.

Dan wraps his arm around her hips. Laura feels the meaty, scented solidity of him. She is sorry. She is aware, more than ever, of his goodness.

He says, "This is great. This is perfect."

She strokes the back of his head. His face, stubbled now, has a sweaty shine, and his well-tended, slick-backed hair has relaxed enough to produce a single oily forelock, about the width of a blade of grass, that dangles to a point just above his brows. He has removed his tie, unbuttoned his shirt; he exudes a complex essence of sweat, Old Spice, the leather of his shoes, and the ineffable, profoundly familiar smell of his flesh—a smell with elements of iron, elements of bleach, and the remotest hint of cooking, as if deep inside him something moist and fatty were being fried.

Laura brings dessert plates and forks from the kitchen. Here she is, in this modest dining room, safe, with her husband and child, as Kitty lies in a hospital room waiting to hear what the doctors have found.

Dan lets Richie remove the burned-out candles before guiding his son's hands in slicing the cake. Laura watches. The dining room seems, right now, like the most perfect imaginable dining room, with its hunter-green walls and its dark maple hutch holding a trove of wedding silver. It seems almost impossibly full: full of the lives of her husband and son; full of the future. It matters; it shines. Whole countries have been decimated, but a force that feels unambiguously like goodness has prevailed; even Kitty, it seems, will be healed by medical science. She will be healed. And if she's not, if she's past help, Dan and Laura and their son and the promise of the second child will all still be here, in this room, where a little boy frowns in concentration over the job of removing the candles, and where his father holds one up to his mouth and exhorts him to lick off the frosting.

Laura reads the moment as it passes. Here it is, she thinks; there it goes. The page is about to turn. She smiles at her son, serenely, from a distance. He smiles back. He licks the end of a burned-out candle. He makes a wish.

SHE finishes brushing her teeth. The dishes have been washed and put away, Richie is in bed, her husband is waiting. She rinses the brush under the tap, rinses her mouth, spits into the sink. Her husband will be on his side of the bed, looking up at the ceiling with his hands clasped behind his head. When she enters the room he will look at her as if he were surprised and happy to see her here, his wife, of all people, about to remove her robe, drape it over the chair, and climb into bed with him. That is his way: boyish surprise; a suave, slightly abashed glee; a deep and distracted innocence with sex coiled inside like a spring. She thinks sometimes, can't help thinking, of those peanut cans sold in novelty shops, the ones with the paper snakes waiting to pop out when the lids are opened. There will be no reading tonight.

She slips her toothbrush back into its slot in the porcelain holder.

When she looks in the medicine-cabinet mirror, she briefly imagines that someone is standing behind her. There is no one, of course; it's just a trick of the light. For an instant, no more than that, she has imagined some sort of ghost self, a second version of her, standing immediately behind, watching. It's nothing. She goes into the bedroom, where her husband is waiting. She removes her robe.

"Hi," he says, confidently, tenderly, from his side of the bed.

"Did you have a nice birthday?" she asks.

"The greatest." He pulls back the sheet for her but she hesitates, standing at the side of the bed, wearing her filmy blue nightgown. She can't seem to feel her body, though she knows it's there.

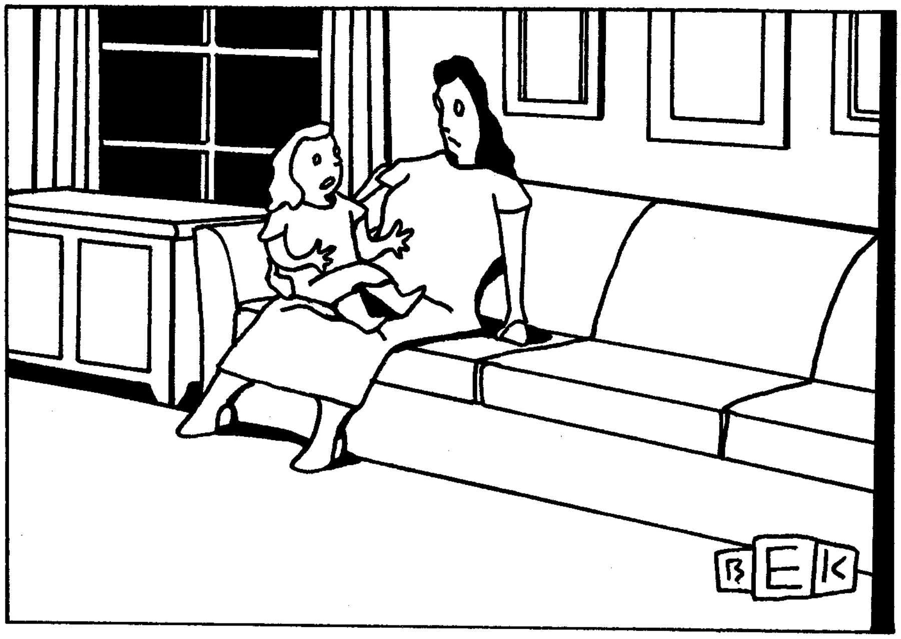
"That's good," she says. "I'm glad you had a nice time."

"You coming to bed?" he says.

"Yes," she answers, and does not move. She might, at this moment, be nothing but a floating intelligence; not even a brain inside a skull, just a presence that perceives, as a ghost might. Yes, she thinks, this is probably how it must feel to be a ghost.

"So," Dan says after a while. "Are you coming to bed?"

"Yes," she says. ♦



"So did the fair princess ever develop melanoma?"

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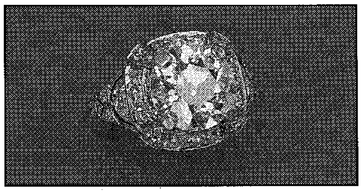
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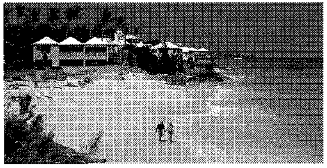
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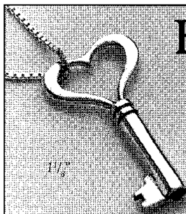

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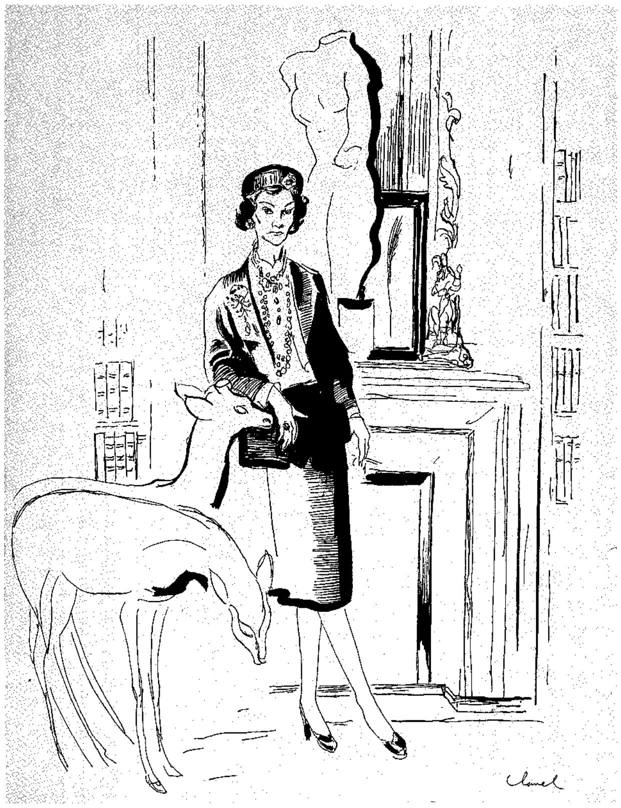
BOOKS

QUI QU'A VU COCO?

Coco Chanel was known not just for her collections of clothes but for her collection of men.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Who is the greatest French woman of the century? Marie Curie's discoveries began in the nineteenth century and, anyway, she was born Polish. Brigitte Bardot, Catherine Deneuve, Simone Signoret, Jeanne Moreau—actresses all, images, in part the creation of others, including our dreaming selves. Simone de Beauvoir, handmaiden of existentialism, inventor of feminism? But if we must name a writer, surely it should be Colette, who wrote as naturally as she slept, danced, or made love, who rendered the tangle of a modern woman's life with the casual calm of classic art. And if we think of Colette we come to Chanel, another tough, industrious child of the provinces who tapped into the realistic essence of French style. Insofar as individual designers can be said to direct the vast, subconsciously swayed movements of fashion, it was she who brought sense and comfort to female clothes, shifting their control from the viewer to the wearer, from how they looked to men to how they felt to women. Breathtaking corsets, giant plumed hats, and floor-length skirts of cumbersome complexity and weight were the style of Gabrielle Chanel's girlhood, when women of means paraded as stiffly as manacled captives; in her long and steadily successful career as a designer she first simplified the hat, then lightened and loosened the dress and lifted it to expose ever more of the ankle. Flapper minimalism was her métier. In the nineteen-twenties, she produced the first little black dress—American *Vogue* called it the Ford of fashion—and the simple suit, usually in lightweight wool jersey, that became her signature piece.



According to Janet Wallach's near-hagiographic, heavily illustrated "Chanel: Her Style and Her Life" (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $35), the birdy little gamine from Auvergne worked a miracle wherever one was needed: "Each new problem in life propelled her to new ideas. With women no longer able to order their drivers to take them shopping on rainy days [the First World War was causing the inconvenience] Chanel invented a rubberized style based on the lines of a chauffeur's coat, with deep pockets and adjustable tabs at the cuffs." Walking on the hot sands of the Lido gave her "the idea to tie two straps around a sheet of cork and cut it into sandals, a style that became popular around the world." Her affair with the Duke of Westminster, the richest man in England, saw his country-weekend sweaters transformed into "snappy cardigans for women," the uniforms of his yacht crew become sailor outfits and nautical chapeaux for milady, and the jewelry ("Indian bibs of rare diamonds and emeralds, matching bracelets of rubies, emeralds and sapphires, brilliant solitaires, strands of diamonds and emeralds, and ropes of pearls") that the besotted Duke bestowed upon her transposed into gaudy costume ornaments—"She turned the snobbish realm of jewelry into the fantasy world of the fake." All this, and Chanel No. 5, too; the scent was named No. 5 without there having been a 1, 2, 3, or 4 and was marketed, in one of Chanel's brilliant adaptations of male accoutrements, in a bottle whose square solidity was "borrowed from the toiletry cases of her lovers." The elixir made her rich for life, a life, as Wallach tells it, that was one long romance and name drop.

Her own name, descended from that of a tribe of peasants who lived on the edge of a chestnut forest in the Cévennes and were driven by the blight to become itinerant peddlers, was all she had to start with. Her parents married fifteen months after she was born. Her mother died when she was eleven, and her faithless, peripatetic father put Gabrielle and her two sisters in an orphanage run by nuns in Aubazine, never to be seen by his daughters again. Though Gabrielle did not elect, at seventeen, to become a nun, a chaste austerity, a quest for purity of purpose and line, remained at the heart of her flair. The nuns had taught her to sew. She took a job as a shopgirl in a lingerie and trousseau firm in Moulins, and worked extra hours for a tailor, mending the uniforms of the

FROM "THE GLASS OF FASHION" (1954) ©THE LITERARY EXECUTORS OF THE LATE SIR CECIL BEATON; OPPOSITE: MARK SHAW/PHOTO RESEARCHERS

A drawing of the designer by Cecil Beaton (opposite) and Chanel in her Paris studio, in 1956, photographed by Mark Shaw. Many of Chanel's most brilliant creations were inspired by the wardrobes of the men in her life.

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GENESIS

Laurel and Hardy at the mouth of a cave,
Abbott and Costello tending the fire,
Marie Dressler picking a raspberry off a nearby bush,
and the Dead End Kids gnawing on bones.

Mae West sampling a bit of wild deer.
Mmm, she is saying, *pas mal.* Now Arnold Schwarzenegger,
coming home from the hills, is dragging behind him
the carcass of his archenemy, Sylvester Stallone.

A dinosaur or two wandering about in search of
Barnum and Bailey. Maria Ouspenskaya, sitting on a rock,
and remembering, in terror, the Great Ice Age. B-r-r, she is saying,
it was so cold even the Wolf Man died.

Then a ripple of rain in a neon sky,
Peking Man singing "April Showers,"
Java Man scribbling more of "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu,"
and the Mutant Ninja Turtles, deep in the dark of the cave,

painting on the wall of the cave, "The Last Supper."

—Robert Mazzocco

Army officers garrisoned in the town. They noticed her, made her a pet; she sang at a local cabaret. According to Wallach, she knew the words to only two songs: "Ko Ko Ri Ko" and "Qui Qu'a Vu Coco?" The soldiers would call out for Coco, and thus she acquired her nickname, although, a tireless obfuscator of her past, she would afterward claim that her father had called her that, on one of his few visits home. She was not beautiful but had for assets a wide mouth, a long neck, an indomitable temperament. Vercingetorix came from the volcanic hills of Auvergne, and Chanel spoke of herself as "the only crater of Auvergne that is not extinct."

By the age of twenty, she had achieved the next social step up from shopgirl and amateur entertainer and become a kept woman. Her keeper was the infantry officer Étienne Balsan; his is the first name we encounter in her pilgrimage of men. A devoted horseman, an indifferent soldier, the good-humored heir to a textile fortune accumulated in Châteauroux, he encouraged Chanel to pursue her possible stage career at Vichy, where her singing coach told her, "You've got a voice like a crow." His parents had recently died, and with his inheritance he purchased an estate called Royallieu, near Compiègne, and invited Chanel to join him there, among the horses and overdressed demimondaines who flocked to the place on the arms of Balsan's aristocratic friends. These women admired Chanel's manlike riding style and the simplified hats she had designed, and had her make hats for them, which they sometimes wore on the stage; photographs of Chanel modelling her own sweeping creations appeared in a 1910 issue of the theatrical periodical *Comoedia Illustrée.* Her vocation as designer didn't take hold, however, until she met Arthur (Boy) Capel, in a burst of Wallach's fulsome, you-are-there prose:

> She saw him first at Pau, a smart town for the racing set, and turned her charms on him at once. With coquettish technique she looked longingly into his eyes, fluttered her lashes, played her necklace to her lips and slithered her body closer to his. He was soon a regular guest at Royallieu.

For a time, the two amiable playboys shared what she later called "my hot little body"; she got to Paris in 1913 by sharing Capel's apartment on the Avenue Gabriel and using Balsan's flat on the Boulevard Malesherbes for her first shop.

Fashion history is made in odd jumps. Boy Capel, supportive lover though he was, didn't take her out much; the scrawny, crow-voiced milliner couldn't hold her own among the pneumatic courtesans who, got up in the ornate, high-waisted styles of Worth, Poiret, and Paquin, filled the cafés with their cultivated chatter. One time when he did take her to a restaurant, "she ate too much and popped her stays," Wallach relates. "Chanel swore she would never wear a tight corset again." Her lean styles, no longer confined to hats, became fashionable during the war; she opened shops in Deauville and Biarritz, and by 1919, she said, she "had woken up famous." She was the new woman:

> Slim, narrow-hipped and nearly breastless, she had shed her corsets, shortened her skirts, cut her long hair and allowed her youthful face to tan in the sun. She lived openly with a man she loved but was not married to, and she enjoyed financial independence as an entrepreneur with a flourishing business.

Yet her lover went back to England to find a wife and to father a daughter; he continued to see Chanel, however, and it was after a visit to her, on his way to meet his wife in the South of France, that he died in a car crash. "She would never love another man as much as she had loved Capel," Wallach writes; but it was not for lack of trying. She took up with the arty crowd, meeting Diaghilev and Cocteau, seducing Stravinsky, failing to seduce Picasso, and travelling to Venice with her dear friends Misia and José-Maria Sert (the latter's murals can still be seen at the Waldorf-Astoria). Chanel was now rich enough to support in the style to which he was accustomed the Grand Duke Dmitri, dashingly exiled from Russia because of his part in the assassination of Rasputin. She always got something out of her lovers, though; Dmitri introduced her to Byzantine jewelry and to the Tsar's former perfumer, the chemist Ernest Beaux, who in 1920 created Chanel No. 5. And then there was, after Dmitri, the surly, stocky poet Pierre Reverdy, Picasso's close friend, who shared with Chanel the knack of always being photographed with a cigarette.

But it is for Chanel's next lover, the Duke of Westminster, that Wallach saves her most throbbing rhapsodies:

> Ruggedly good-looking with a large frame and handsome face, reddish blond hair and intense blue eyes, Westminster oozed elegance. . . . Loyal servants scurried to do whatever he asked, while high-society ladies scuffled to be at his beck and call.

Oozing while his lessers scurried and scuffled, he nevertheless found Chanel resistant to his Channel-crossing courtship gifts of "out-of-season strawberries, peaches, nectarines and freshly caught Scottish salmon. . . . He even sent her a basket of fresh vegetables, and when her servant reached inside, he plucked out a giant emerald." How could the little orphan from Aubazine not succumb? He had houses everywhere, two great yachts, and in his fifty-four-bedroom main domicile, Eaton Hall, "the acres of walls were covered with paintings by Rubens and Raphael, Rembrandt and Hals, Velázquez and Goya." Chanel and the Duke were together for six years, sailing, hunting, consorting with the likes of Churchill and the Prince of Wales. She even tried, in her mid-forties, to become pregnant with Westminster's heir, hoping to induce their marriage; she submitted, she later allowed, to surgery and "humiliating acrobatics." In vain: the Duke took to younger companions and married the deliciously named Loelia Ponsonby, half his age and "the well-bred daughter of the protocol chief to the king."

Chanel's next noteworthy lover was Paul Iribe, a chubby, complicated (Colette thought he was demonic) Basque cartoonist from Angoulême, who designed for her an array of antic, expensive jewelry. Hotheads the same age, they might have married, but in 1935 he collapsed before her eyes on the tennis court at her Riviera villa, and died a few hours later. If Iribe had a touch of the demonic, Chanel's wartime affair nearly damned her with disgrace. When war was de-

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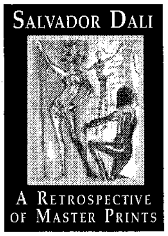

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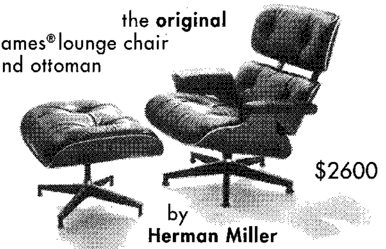

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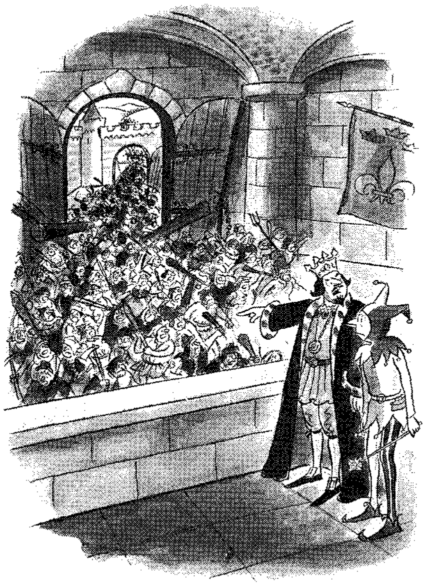
clared, in 1939, she closed the House of Chanel for the duration; when the Germans invaded, she fled as far as Pau, but at the invitation of the new masters of Paris she returned to her rooms at the Ritz. She took a German lover, Baron Hans Gunther von Dincklage, called Spatz; a figure about Paris before the war and the son of an Englishwoman, he was a Nazi intelligence officer with a taste for fine things and for staying away from Berlin. They were, it would seem, happy—"happy," in the words of Chanel's best biographer, Edmonde Charles-Roux, "in a world in which mountains of misfortune were rising around them." The same obfuscation that hides her girlhood masks this period. After the war, Chanel joked, "At my age, when a man wants to sleep with you, you don't ask to see his passport." She and her German contacts evidently concocted a scheme whereby she would exploit her friendship with Churchill to arrange a conditional German surrender; she travelled to Spain with this purpose, taking with her Vera Bate, an English friend who had married an Italian colonel and was surviving the war in Rome until the Germans kidnapped her for Chanel's grandiose mission.

More damningly, Chanel attempted to use the Nazi anti-Semitic laws to wrest control of Chanel No. 5 from her partner and backer Pierre Wertheimer, who was exiled in New York, supervising the perfume's successful American manufacture—it, too, had been kidnapped. (The recipe demanded that seven hundred pounds of jasmine be smuggled out of Grasse. The perfume was also manufactured in France, since Wertheimer had cannily put the company in the hands of an Aryan associate, and was therefore one of the few products available to both Allied and Axis consumers.) Chanel's legal suit failed, and eventually she and Wertheimer settled to mutual advantage, but her attempted exploitation of the Holocaust was not becoming. According to another biographer, Pierre Galante, she enjoyed wartime favors because "like her friend, Pierre Laval"—the premier of the puppet Vichy government—"she was an Auvergnat." After the Liberation, it was said that she was protected by her old shooting chum Churchill; she was briefly arrested but, unlike lesser women who had slept with the enemy, was spared public humiliation and a shaved head. She exiled herself to Switzerland, where she continued living with and supporting Spatz.

Yet she was forgiven, because she was, in a way, France itself—the ubiquitous name of French chic, its subtle, rational, penetrating glamour. She returned to Paris at the age of seventy, and, though her first postwar showing, in 1954, drew mixed and even vicious reviews, the Americans continued to love her youthful little suits and dresses, and she enjoyed prosperity and acclaim until her death, at the age of eighty-eight. Other designers, like Dior and Schiaparelli, could create sensations with their fanciful, overblown revivals of Belle Époque femininity, but in the end no one designed for women as Chanel did. When *les grandes cocottes* came into her shop in 1913 wearing their immense hats, she asked, "How can the brain function in those things?" At the height of the miniskirt craze, she insisted that the hemline should be—in a paraphrase by a third French biographer, Marcel Haedrich—"the sensible one that makes it possible to sit down decently." And skirts do return, after every fashion flurry, to the knee-grazing Chanel length. She was forgiven because she was a genius with scissors in her hand and pins in her mouth, who even when she was the world's richest self-made woman continued to do fittings herself, kneeling at the feet of clients until her knees ached, ripping seams, resetting shoulders, lying flat on the floor to check hems and make sure "the underside is as perfect as the outside." Perfection is felt. "Some women want to be gripped inside their clothes," she said. "Never. I want women to enter my dresses and to hell with everything else." Wallach ends her whirl through Chanel's fantastic life with a suitably sober assessment of her couture: "All is practical, all is logical, all is done to make a woman feel good about herself." ♦

FAMILY ALBUM
BY RICHARD MERKIN

BARNEY TOBEY



"Go down there and make them laugh!"

FROM the outset, *The New Yorker* has been blessed with cartoonists whose very signatures suggest highly recognizable styles and visions. Equal in its contributions is a group of artists whose work is a trifle less idiosyncratic, and at the apex of that group was Barney Tobey, whose drawings can be seen in the exhibition "Barney Tobey of *The New Yorker*," running through January 9th at the New York Public Library. From the early thirties until his death, in 1989, "B Tobey," as he signed his work, did more than twelve hundred cartoons and spot drawings, and also covers, for the magazine. His currency was a compassionate comprehension of what makes this village of ours tick. An exemplary drawing shows a Tobey Man, in Madison Avenue snap-brim and Brooks trenchcoat, emerging from the bowels of the subway; he is greeted on the sidewalk by toddler and spouse, she with a brisk and (to judge by his smile) much needed Martini in hand. It's the brighter side of "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit." Tobey had an unfailing ability to deliver the punch line in a persuasive graphic voice, and his pictures consistently evolved, toward greater refinement, greater expediency, and, always, greater laughs. ♦

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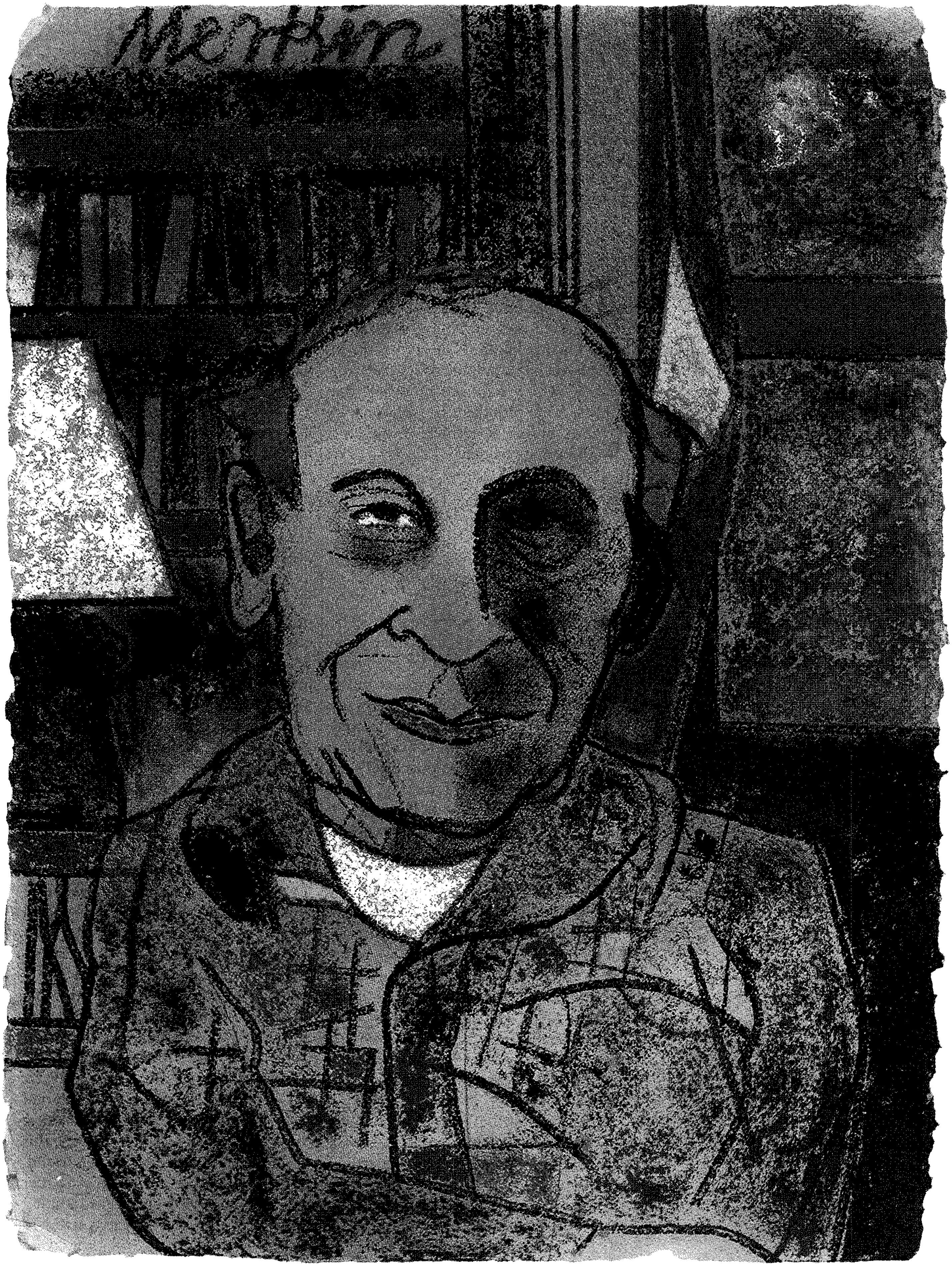
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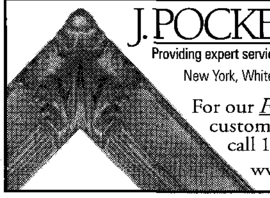

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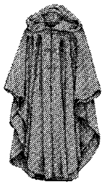

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BOOKS

DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE

The woman who revolutionized English cooking.

BY JULIAN BARNES

In 1959, Evelyn Waugh revised "Brideshead Revisited" for a collected edition. Fourteen years on from first publication, he admitted that the novel had a number of "grosser passages" which required modification. These were provoked, he had come to realize, by the austerities surrounding wartime composition:

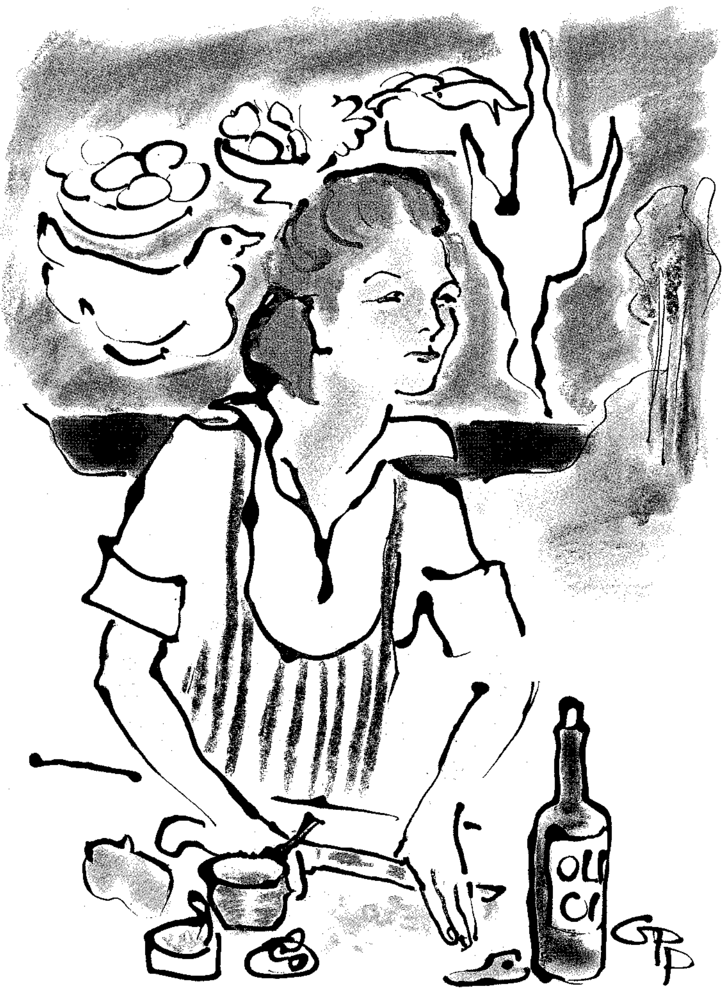
> It was a bleak period of present privation and threatening disaster—the period of soya beans and Basic English—and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I find distasteful.

Nor did this "bleak period" end in 1945. Austerity and rationing continued under the peacetime Labour Government, which Waugh biliously characterized as "the Cripps-Attlee terror" but many thought a rare reforming administration. "I suppose you will not come back to this country," he wrote to the Paris-based Nancy Mitford in July, 1946. "You are very wise. The food gets drearier and drearier." A friend of mine recently confirmed this observation. "We ate better during the war than after it," he recalled. Rationing was prolonged until 1954, while exchange-control regulations restricted foreign travel even for those who could afford it.

Yet "Brideshead"'s initial success was partly due to its very gluttony of prose and content, while the overhang of austerity also helped exoticize the work of voluptuaries such as Lawrence Durrell and Cyril Connolly. Durrell's "Alexandria Quartet," his hymn of praise to the Eastern Mediterranean, with its evocations of warm sea and sloe-eyed women, fell upon a readership whose female half had only recently, it seemed, given up painting false stocking seams on their legs with makeup pencil. Elizabeth David, a young upper-middle-class Englishwoman who had spent the war in Egypt working for the Admiralty and the Ministry of Information, knew Durrell in his wartime Alexandria. Back in Britain during the harsh winter of 1946-47, she found herself in a Ross-on-Wye hotel where the food was "produced with a kind of bleak triumph which amounted almost to a hatred of humanity and humanity's needs." In response, she started jotting down what was as much a series of aromatic memories as useful recipes for embattled British housewives. One of the memories contained in the manuscript she submitted to the publisher John Lehmann was a recipe for stuffing a whole roast sheep. At the time, the meat ration in Britain consisted of a pound per person per week. It was partly the surreal implausibility of the dish which persuaded the publisher's reader, Julia Strachey, to recommend the work.

"A Book of Mediterranean Food" came out in 1950. Forty-two years later, when she died, Elizabeth David—who had familiarly become "E.D." even to those who had never met her—was routinely farewelled as the doyenne of food writers, the woman who had taught the British to cook, the most important influence on the British kitchen since Mrs. Beeton. The legend went like this: poor benighted Brits, mired in snoek and Spam, believing olive oil was something you bought at the chemist's for medicinal purposes, were hauled into culinary awareness by E. David, whereupon they all started growing their own basil and baking their own bread. In some respects, this legend is accurate. A painter friend, now in his sixties, recalls his mother saying, "Eating for me is like cleaning my teeth"; he now cooks to a standard that E.D. would herself approve. Her writing was straightforwardly inspiring: a woman friend recalls reading a magazine article about breadmaking and immediately going out to scour west London for live yeast. She made her acolytic bread for several months until her gas bill suggested the downside to home baking for the single person.

At the same time, the story is, of course, more complicated. Just as there was little stuffing of whole sheep in nineteen-fifties Britain, so a lot of E.D.'s lauded ingredients were unobtainable to the point of myth. Early readers of Elizabeth David were inevitably indulging in a little light gastroporn. Male adolescents of the time tended to consume girlie magazines while waiting for the real thing; similarly, the British domestic cook had a few panting years to endure before the garlic and basil became available and olive oil retreated from the chemist's. Between 1950 and 1960, Mrs. David published five classic guides to Mediterranean, Italian, French Country, French Provincial, and Summer cooking; yet her influence did not really begin to take hold until the sixties and seventies. By this time, her work had become both more scholarly and more infrequent: the remaining three decades of her life produced three weighty books—on bread, spices, and ice—plus a collection of miscellaneous pieces. Her books sold more than a million copies over the years, but that does not mean that her sales penetration was all that broad. People who know about Elizabeth David tend to have four or five of her books, so we might be talking of two hundred thousand households, or perhaps fewer. She was much acknowledged in the breach, and her secondary influence was probably greater than her primary one. For instance, she constantly urged the necessity and virtue of using the correct equipment and proper serving dishes, and she opened her own shop in Chelsea to this purpose: but it was the entrepreneur and style popularizer Terence Conran who took her ideas to the wider public.



Before Elizabeth David, garlic and basil were hard to come by in Britain, and olive oil could be found only at the pharmacy.

GLADYS PERINT PALMER

Another reason for this secondary influence was her absolute refusal to be a public figure. She received many honors, both in Britain and in France, but her form of communication was the written word. She belonged much more to the prewar world of Norman Douglas (writer and gastronome, early friend and influence) than to the postwar television world of the personality chef and the style huckster. Her first and only public interview occurred on television in 1989, when she was seventy-five. It was a considerable coup for the production company, rather like netting J. D. Salinger or Thomas Pynchon; but the result was awkward and at times pitiable. Evelyn Waugh was also pre-television, but his occasional appearances were compelling, both for his formidable personality and for the evident contempt with which he regarded this infantile medium. E.D. had some of the same cornered-badger prickliness, but asserted herself by evasion, leaving long silences, giving two-word answers, and evincing far less interest in the process, the medium, and the question than in the stuffed courgette in front of her on the plate.

She could be formidable and dismissive in person, permanently banishing those who offended or failed her; and she is often formidable in the text. She writes like a writer—that's to say, as one addressing an equal—rather than as an indulgent instructress jollying along any passing five-thumbed débutant. She is not complicit with other people's ignorance. Reading her, you have a strong sense of a person whose cardinal principles were truth and pleasure. This does not make for an easy relationship with those who take truthfulness to be a sign of hauteur and pleasure to be a sibling of self-indulgence.

"SOUTH WIND THROUGH THE KITCHEN: THE BEST OF ELIZABETH DAVID" (Michael Joseph / Penguin) is a selection of her writing chosen and commented upon by friends, family, and followers. To those familiar with her work, it will be a concentration, a sauce reduction; to those coming new to her, it will and should act in the same way as a perfect tray of hors d'oeuvres. (And in case anyone thinks the comparison belittling, here is E.D. on that item: "Now, in spite of all that grave gastronomes are in the habit of saying about the pernicious custom of starting off a meal with a lot of little oddments and titbits, it is nevertheless a fact that the quality of a restaurant may very largely be judged by the way in which the hors-d'oeuvre are planned and presented.") I'm not sure how useful the interspersing remarks will be, especially to an American

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VILLE ET VILLAGE

reader. While the urge to pay tribute is admirable, Elizabeth David is her own best advocate and, of course, a better writer than almost all who here record their debts. The oddest comment comes from Sir Terence Conran, who in the course of that 1989 TV program proclaimed, "She writes really beautifully." Now, after her death, he seems to have changed his mind, snootily referring to "a style that was a curious hybrid of the enthusiastic schoolmistress and the dowager duchess." Sir Terence is not a persuasive authority: the prose of his own four-paragraph tribute is both slovenly and egotistical, as studded with "I" as a ham with cloves. E.D. wrote as she cooked: with simplicity, purity, color, self-effacing authority, and a respect for tradition.

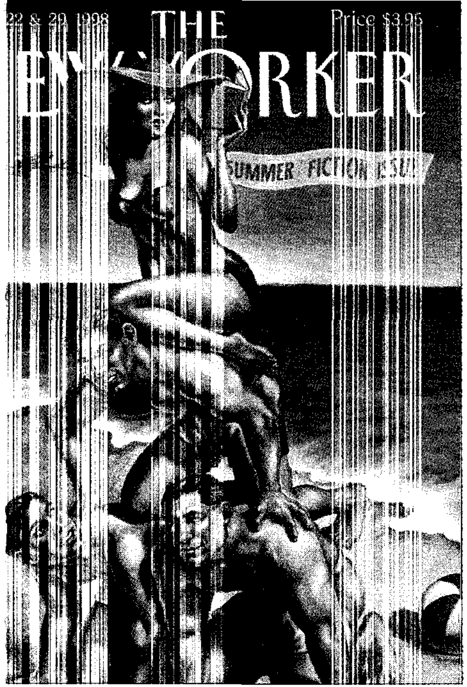
Barbara Kafka, in the present volume, calls E.D.'s recipes "deceptively simple, and often sketchy." This is right: her instructions imply a reader-cook skilled in the basics and prepared to vary and improvise according to time and market supply. Most people aren't like that, of course. Many of us cook with a kind of anxious pedantry, convinced that if the exact wording, and the exact spirit behind that wording, isn't followed, then our guests will throw up first their hands and then their stomachs. It's not that E.D. herself is unaware of failure. "In cooking," she wrote, "the possibility of muffing a dish is always with us. Nobody can eliminate that." But some food writers know better how to predict (often literal) sticking points, and how to mitigate the guilt and self-loathing of failure.

And it's not just the full muff one fears. When you succeed with a dish described by other writers, you feel you have made that dish; when you succeed with E.D., you feel—and this is doubtless an unfair, chippy response to her Olympian standing—that you have made "an E.D. dish," one, moreover, that she herself would have made just a little bit better. Half-competent amateurs quickly learn not to cook from volumes with full-page glossy gastroporn pix, because their own culinary productions will never attain such lustre. Fortunately, Elizabeth David never used more than evocative black-and-white drawings in her books, but her prose somehow predicts a similar gap between her fragrant concoction and your burnt offering.

It is the touch of unthinking imprecision which is so unnerving. The other week, for instance, as part of this review, I had a go at something which looked pretty unmuffable. Page 47, Minestra di Pomidoro, from her "Italian Food" (the book of which she was most proud, and which Evelyn Waugh chose as his Book of the Year when it came out, in 1954). The recipe consists of three sentences of instruction, followed by three of commentary. The underlying premise is that if you cook the soup for no longer than ten minutes the initial freshness of the tomatoes is retained. With a confidence verging on the fullish I assembled the necessaries, including homemade chicken stock and fresh basil from the greenhouse.

E.D.'s first sentence reads like this: "Melt 1 1/2 lbs (675g) chopped and skinned tomatoes in olive oil; add a clove of garlic and some fresh parsley or basil or marjoram." Simple? Listen: nothing is simple to the Anxious Pedant. The restaurateur Prue Leith told me that at her cookery school she had once watched a wretched pupil (male, of course) carry out the following first line of a recipe: "Separate the eggs." For a thoughtful while he pondered the two eggs laid out in front of him, before carefully moving one a few inches to his left and the other a few inches to his right. Satisfied, he went on to the second line of instruction. I feel for this bonehead. And if he is reading this I'm sure he will sympathize with the glossological fever that the first line of Minestra di Pomidoro provoked. The initial problem areas were: (1) "Chopped": no indication of size of desired dice. (2) "Skinned": does this naturally imply "deseeded" or did the recipe date from pre-deseeding days? (3) "Olive oil": how much, exactly, or even approximately? (4) "A clove of garlic": three possible interpretations: (a) popped in whole (unlikely); (b) crushed juicily with the garlic crusher (but would she approve of such an instrument—lots of them don't, do they?); (c) finely chopped. (5) "Parsley or basil or marjoram": Well, which is best, and what difference does it make? She can't be expecting us to exercise our free will, can she?

All this is a normal, indeed ritual, part of cooking, it seems to me. I argued myself to various conclusions. (Recipes that blandly propose timings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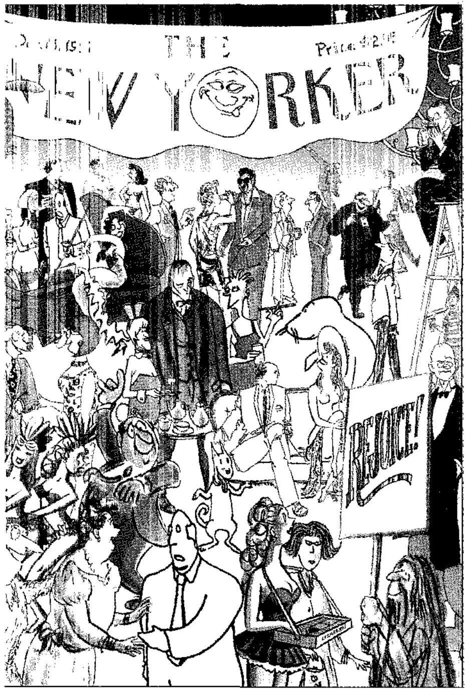
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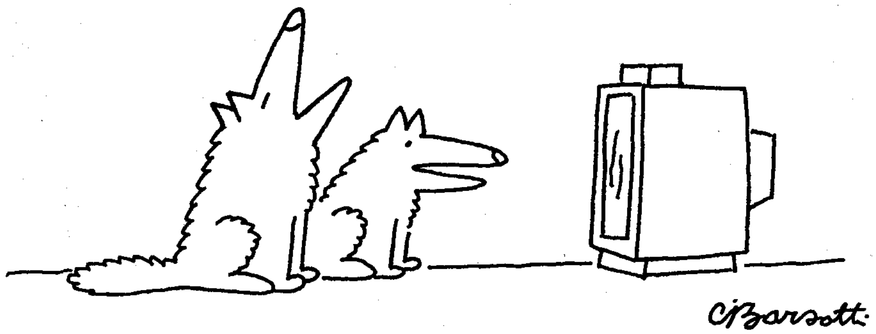

"Keep it up—the picture's coming in."

• •

for preparation and cooking should also, if they are being honest, add extra minutes for paralyzing fits of indecision.) The tomatoes were chopped, and the oil sizzling, when my understanding thumped belatedly against the first word of the recipe: "Melt." How could I have missed it until now? *Melt*? *Melt a tomato*? Even a chopped one? The implausibility of the verb froze me. Perhaps if you're south of Naples, and beneath the intense noonday sun your fingers have eased from the plant something that is less a tomato than a warm scarlet deliquescence waiting to happen; then again, perhaps, the thing might melt under your spatula. But would these muscular cubettes I was now easing into the oil ever do such a thing? (Don't imagine, by the way, that I was working with some genetically enhanced supermarket trophy-tom. These were my French greengrocer's finest vine-ripened items, even if "vine-ripened" nowadays seems to mean little more than "vine-sold.") I found myself, as the Anxious Pedant frequently does, caught between two incompatibilities. On the one hand, I believed, or wanted to believe, that with a few encouraging prods the tomatoes would, by a culinary process hitherto unknown to me but promised by my trustworthy tutoress, suddenly melt; at the same time, I was pursued by the sane fear that cooking the surly chunks any longer in the oil and thus adding to the over-all ten-minute time limit would make them lose their freshness and vitiate the whole point of the recipe. For several fretful minutes I waited for the miracle "melt." Then, with a cookish oath, I seized the potato masher and mashed the shit out of them, hurriedly washed up the guilty instrument, and continued to the next stage of the recipe. The soup did, in the end, taste wonderful—even if not quite as wonderful as if E.D. had made it.

Could it be that Elizabeth David was too good a writer to be a food writer? Or is this just special pleading by one who needs constant textual hand-holding? Probably. E.D. cites a recipe of the French gastrotechnologist Édouard de Pomiane as "the best kind of cookery writing," by which she means something that is "courageous, courteous, adult." Further, "It is creative in the true sense of that ill-used word, creative because it invites the reader to use his own critical and inventive faculties, sends him out to make discoveries, form his own opinions, observe things for himself, instead of slavishly accepting what the books tell him." E.D. herself could not be better described than as "courageous, courteous, adult." Perhaps her ellipses are in fact sly encouragements to adulthood. Perhaps my frenzied use of the potato masher was, in its small and shameful way, creative?

ELIZABETH DAVID stood for: excellence of ingredients, simplicity of preparation, respect for tradition (as long as that tradition enclosed the first two principles) and for region. She stood against: fuss, overdecoration, pretentiousness; "heaps of vegetables" and "food tormented into irrelevant shapes"; the castellated radish, the limply supportive lettuce leaf, the worm cast of potato salad. She was wary of three-star restaurants and ambivalent about nouvelle cuisine. She sang of the Mediterranean but was also learned about British food writing. Her approach is always unsnobbish, even if snobberies attach to some of her followers. She knew France well enough to know also how badly it was and is possible to eat there, in those "country town Hôtels des Voyageurs, du Commerce, du Lion d'Or" to which her business took her. She could be scholarly about the history of sardine canning, richly evocative about village markets, particular about "the sound of air gruesomely whistling through sheeps' lungs frying in oil." She described the state of the British bread industry with a fury worthy of Evelyn Waugh, but, instead of Wavianly bemoaning the equivalent of the Cripps-Attlee terror and retreating into the brandy balloon, she told people how to go about making proper bread themselves and helped kick-start the British bread revival. She was deeply alive to the history of food and its many attendant ironies—how, for instance, "for centuries the working man envied the white bread of the privileged. Now he may very soon grow to envy them their brown whole-wheat bread."

E.D. was a liberator; perhaps it is not absurd to compare her effect on a certain sector of tired, hungry, impoverished fifties Britain with Kinsey's effect on America. Perhaps she knew even more than he: that pine nuts, basil, and garlic are more certain providers of pleasure than unreliable human flesh. She became famous, revered and fetishized within her own culture, to the point where one instinctively searches for the *but*. Asking around among foodies, I turned up a few small buts, or semi-buts: that all food writing is evolutionary, not revolutionary; that other, forgotten figures were aware of the South at the same time; that her influence is narrower than supporters claim, or hope; that the over-all effect of her work has been to persuade Britain away from its authentic culinary roots, and led to the geographical anomaly of the Birmingham housewife proudly serving up a Provençal dinner. "To put it crudely," an ex-restaurant critic suggested to me, "where are the recipes for Brussels sprouts?" Where, indeed; and that is part of the point. In "French Provincial Cooking" Elizabeth David quoted Ford Madox Ford, fellow-Mediterraneanist and enthusiastic home cook, on one of the prime virtues of Provence: "There there is no more any evil, for there the apple will not flourish and the

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ACROSS

1	S + TRAPPED
6	C + RIN(g) + KLE (*elk* rev.)
8	HOST (2 defs.)
9	PERU (anag.)
11	IONIC (hidden)
12	MATCH (2 defs.)
14	ABYSS (hidden)
16	T(I)ARA
18	(s)INGE(r)
19	LUTE (*loot* hom.)
20	TIPSTER (anag.)
21	SOCRATES (anag.)

DOWN

1	SCHEMATI + C (*a chemist* anag.)
2	RISE (*ryes* hom.)
3	ANTI + C
4	PLENTY (hidden in odd letters)
5	E(ERIES)T
7	H(UCKST)ERS (*stuck* anag.)
10	RAN INTO (*rain* anag., *not* anag.)
13	T + RAGIC (*cigar* rev.)
15	BALS + A (*slab* rev.)
17	BUTT (2 defs.)

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brussels sprout will not grow at all."

These buts and semi-buts would have been irrelevant to those who assembled in February of 1994 for the sale of E.D.'s kitchen remnants. The event was held on a Tuesday, and the previous weekend the west London showroom of Phillips the auctioneers was packed. I went along one viewing afternoon, intending to return for the sale, but was unnerved by the atmosphere, a smellable mix of melancholy, hysteria, and acquisitiveness. The melancholy came not so much from the hovering fact of Mrs. David's death two years previously as from the pathetic nature of most items: chipped jugs, stained colanders, battered sieves, stained cookbooks, bashed-up wooden spoons. Apart from a Welsh dresser and the large table at which E.D. had both cooked and written (bought by Prue Leith for eleven hundred pounds), it was—objectively—junk. As one of her nephews somewhat tactlessly admitted, "The best has been creamed off. It's gone to family and friends. These are the dregs." But these resonant dregs had been touched by the radioactive hand of Mrs. David, and the auction raised forty-nine thousand pounds, three times the Phillips estimate. Pointedly, even things she didn't want—kitchen knick-knacks given by friends, left in their boxes and never used or thrown away—were bought as examples of Davidiana.

In 1976, when Elizabeth David collected her Order of the British Empire, the Queen asked her what she did. "Write cookery books, Ma'am." To which the Queen responded, "That must be very useful." It isn't known if the monarch then rushed—or sent—out for potted basil, proper olive oil, live yeast, and the right sort of bread crock. But for once she spoke for her nation. E.D. was, and after her death continues to be, very useful. It isn't always the correct accolade for a prose writer, but on this occasion it was. ◆

DESIGNING MOTHER

A lonely daughter's elegant legacy.

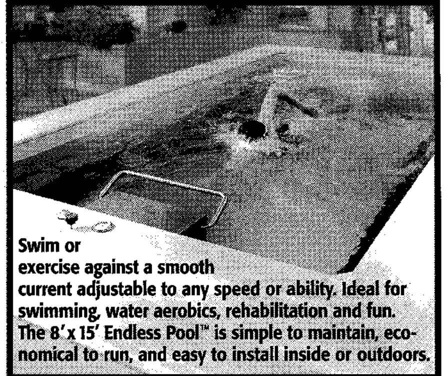
BY DAPHNE MERKIN

Lois Gould

KAREN CALDICOTT

IN the annals of childhood memoirs, the saga of the poor little rich girl who has a nanny all to herself and a bedroom decorated with flowery chintz yet doesn't get cuddled rates a dubious place in our hearts. Perhaps it's because few of us feel we were loved or appreciated enough, even without the benefit of fancy trimmings, or perhaps it's because we find it hard to get worked up about deprivation we can't see but have to take on faith. Compared with the indignities that come with poverty, the pathos of privilege—the sorrow of having had everything but the emotional whipped cream—is less tangible, and as a result rarely gets its empathic due.

Lois Gould's unself-pitying account of growing up without psychological nutrition amid Upper East Side plenty, "Mommy Dressing: A Love Story, After a Fashion" (Anchor; $22.95), is successful in large part because it takes this readerly resistance into account. Gould, the daughter of the pioneering fashion designer Jo Copeland, is a novelist whose high-pitched temperament has always been attuned to sexual politics; "Such Good Friends," her best-selling first novel, drew a picture of female disgust with male infidelity twenty years before that subject was exhaustively mined and finally hoisted on its own petard in "The First Wives Club." But she has wisely decided to tell her own story straight, leaving the tsk-tsking to others. She gives us the pink-chiffon atmosphere of her youth with few apolo-



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gies for the perks that the rich were more likely to take for granted before the Second World War than they are now—loyal servants who took care of everything from buying toothpaste to fixing the drinks, and trips that required matching leather steamer trunks fitted out with drawers and cases. The Manhattan of Gould's childhood belongs to an age before "the inevitable decline of formal dinner parties," and is very much a character in her tale: it wafts through these pages, a misty vision of long-gone double-decker buses and meals at Schrafft's, of embroidered cocktail napkins and "pouter-pigeon fur coats." One of the qualities that lift Gould's story above the ordinary reminiscence of loneliness and smock dresses is that it rarely becomes shrill. (Look how unhappy I was!) Although her childhood sounds like a gilded cage of horrors—as a little girl she was locked in the closet when she "turned on the 'waterworks,'" and she ate dinner most nights on a tray in her room, like the invalid Joan Crawford in "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?," wearing pajamas and facing the wall—she looks back more in comprehension than in anger.

GOULD'S memoir, whose short sections have names borrowed from the vocabulary of fashion ("Mix & Match," "Silhouette II," "Separates IV"), has been stitched together from the luxurious fabrics and wittily conceived outfits that she had in lieu of her mother's real presence: "I remember, too, a ring of white mink that seemed to be the collar of a black wool suit—until the jacket came off, and the fur was still there circling your throat, forming a spectacular top to a sexy black halter dress." She had little contact with her mother; when Copeland wasn't working late, she was out to dinner or off in Europe. If you can't get what you want, you take what you need—and in this instance, it was a mother's "passion for dressing up." Gould notes, "Nothing of the rest of her life was visible to me. Unless the dressing was, in fact, the life."

Copeland may have travelled by ocean liner to Paris and held sleek parties in her Park Avenue apartment, with its foyer of black-and-white diamond tiles, but she was no lady of leisure; all this fed her work, which she taxied "downtown" to, on Seventh Avenue. She spent much of the day on her knees, with pins in her mouth, and was one of the first American designers—along with Hattie Carnegie, Claire McCardell, and Vera Maxwell—to achieve star status, with a label of her own and a celebrity clientele, which included Greer Garson, Hildegarde, and Dolores Del Rio. Copeland came by her lack of maternal instincts naturally: her own mother died giving birth to her, and her father was a blouse jobber who sent her to design school when she was fifteen, with the expectation that she would use her artistic gifts to help pay her older brother's way through Harvard Law School. Copeland's fifty-year career began with her sketching the latest styles for dress manufacturers; she was referred to early on as "the Chanel of America," and when she died, in 1982, her obituary credited her with creating the two-piece suit.

As any woman who has ever opened the thick fall issue of *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar* knows, fashion exists to change. What's less apparent, however, is the way that fashions in life styles also mutate: Copeland was a working woman in a time when it was considered déclassé ("That my mother supported us entirely out of her earnings was kept a shameful secret . . .") and a single mother, as well. Gould's dashing father, Ed—he was good-looking enough to merit comparison to Cary Grant—walked out on Lois and her older brother when she was three, and although he showed up regularly to have Friday-night dinner with her, he effectively ducked all other responsibility. He often told his daughter that he had never "possessed" her mother, but even as a girl of seven or eight Lois seems to have intuited the fearful encasement that kept Copeland from connecting to anyone: "I knew she had failed him, hadn't loved him, hadn't wanted me, or my brother, didn't love any of us." Her brother was sent off to boarding school shortly after he disturbed one of their mother's chic soirées; Lois was put in the care of a Fräulein Wegge, who force-fed her, administered laxatives and enemas, and attended bund meetings in Yorkville just as Nazi sympathizers held rallies in Madison Square Garden. Gould describes herself as a klutz (she was a failure at tennis, in spite of the outfits "buttoned with little crossed racquets" or "dotted with tiny Dunlop balls" which her mother whipped up for her), and insists that she had an "alarmingly low cuteness quotient." All this negative self-evaluation, of course, only makes the reader warm to the little girl, left to her unmet yearnings and her collection of dolls, which were brought back as souvenirs from the foreign countries her mother visited: "Each was exquisitely costumed in a mantilla or lederhosen or a dirndl. Each sat primly in its place, to be admired from a safe, touch-me-not distance."

Eventually Gould escapes the "rarefied airlessness" of her childhood by attending public high school (she persuaded her mother to let her go to Bronx Science) and then Wellesley, where she gives away the box of carefully chosen Jo Copeland originals—"the yellow bolero with the chalk and jet beads"—that her mother sends twice a semester. "The cruelty of what I was doing never occurred to me," she observes. "A form of matricide, really."

Gould's feelings are hardly as lethal as all that. This book is a sidelong tribute to one survivor from another, written in a brisk, fluid style that doesn't try for fireworks. Instead of offering direct commentary, the author consciously adopts social clichés ("smooth talker," "swell couple," "live wire," etc.) to point up the painful discrepancy between surface and reality. Her memories—half stardust, half ashes—underscore the fact that glamour is not a child-friendly business. One comes away with images of feminine loveliness, of "kicked-off satin mules with their soft feathered collars," set against a frozen landscape of human ineptitude: "My mother never did learn to keep house, carry groceries, or love anyone." There is a deliberately elliptical quality to this story that, in some curious way, reflects the coded manner in which children come to read even the most uncommunicative of parents. The compressed skill with which Gould has written about a woman who preferred the company of taffeta to that of her daughter suggests that she learned something from her mother about the uses of emotional distance. I imagine that Jo Copeland—whose work was a "defense weapon," a "bright armorial shield"—would recognize herself in the accomplished daughter who studied her so quietly and so well. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

DREAM CHILDREN, by A. N. Wilson (Norton; $23.95). A novel by this wicked English wit, even one about pedophilia, will not exactly be an "issues" novel. The Humbert here is Oliver Gold, an ex-academic and would-be philosopher, and his Lolita is a placable, animal-loving ten-year-old named Roberta, whose greatest sorrow is that he threatens to leave. Oliver is obsessed not with an elusive love but with being caught—particularly by Bobs's mother, who adores him, as do her female lover, her mother, and the au pair. This has the kind of sly humor where grimness itself becomes the joke.

THE TALE OF THE BAMBOO CUTTER, translated into modern Japanese by Yasunari Kawabata, and into English by Donald Keene (Kodansha; $25). This charmingly chilling fairy tale is the oldest work of Japanese fiction extant, its author's identity long lost. The heroine, Kaguya-hime ("the shining princess"), begins her career on earth just like Thumbelina, but dispatches a series of suitors with outscale, Turandot-like cruelty before returning to her lunar home. Masayuki Miyata's bright, bold illustrations perfectly complement this elegant bilingual edition, and Keene has outdone himself in finding English equivalents for the outrageous puns that punctuate the story.

THE HIDDEN WORDSWORTH, by Kenneth R. Johnston (Norton; $45). This massive, illuminating volume focusses on the poet's first thirty-six years, the tumultuous decades immortalized in "The Prelude." Johnston's spacious, absorbing argument—that Wordsworth's moments of emotion recollected in tranquillity were themselves rather less than tranquil—is amply supported by a thorough documentation of the multifarious life and times of the young poet, at Hawkshead, at Cambridge, in Grasmere, and abroad.

NOBODY SAID NOT TO GO, by Ken Cuthbertson (Faber & Faber; $29.95). Emily Hahn (1905-97) was one of *The New Yorker's* legendary far-flung correspondents; her prodigious output included fifty-two books, and she lived as fast as she wrote. This admiring account portrays a hard-drinking, cigar-smoking beauty, sojourning in the Congo in the thirties, Shanghai under Japanese bombardment, and occupied Hong Kong during the Second World War. Hahn also dallied with wealthy businessmen and an opium-addicted Chinese poet before bearing the child of a married British Army intelligence officer.

BREAKUP, by Catherine Texier (Doubleday; $19.95). An Americanized French writer, recently divorced from her husband—with whom she had two children and edited an underground magazine in Alphabet City—tells the story of their literary love triangle (the other woman is his editor) with a strung-out theatrical indecency that's addictive, if not always intentional. Texier neatly captures the overblown style of the dumpee's revenge fantasy without losing the novelist's sense of perspective, but her memoir also serves as an elegy for the East Village avant-garde.

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As she did previously in her Edgar Award-nominated novel *Hearts and Bones,* author **Margaret Lawrence** returns us to post-Revolutionary War Maine in ***BLOOD RED ROSES***, and reunites us with midwife Hannah Trevor. In this atmospheric amalgam of history, humanity, and suspense, Hannah endeavors to solve a series of shocking murders, as she wages her own private battle against a heartless legal body that threatens to take her young daughter away from her.

And speaking of meaningful change, it seems increasingly likely that scientists will soon be able to engineer human life, and in the process turn our notions of family upside down. In ***REMAKING EDEN***, molecular biologist **Lee M. Silver** demystifies the science behind cloning, genetic enhancement, and other reprogenetic technologies, exploring the possibilities that await us in the brave new world. Except it won't be Huxley's brave new world, Silver tells us, but one in which the natural human desire to have children and provide them with all possible advantages will drive these thrilling—and terrifying—new technologies.

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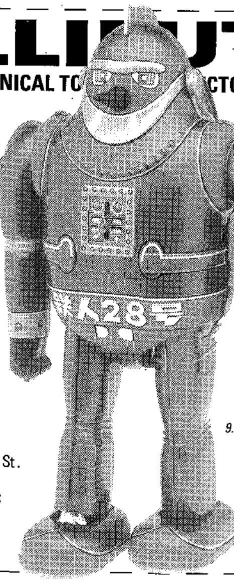

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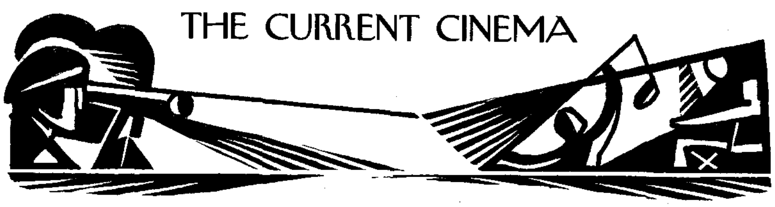


THE CURRENT CINEMA

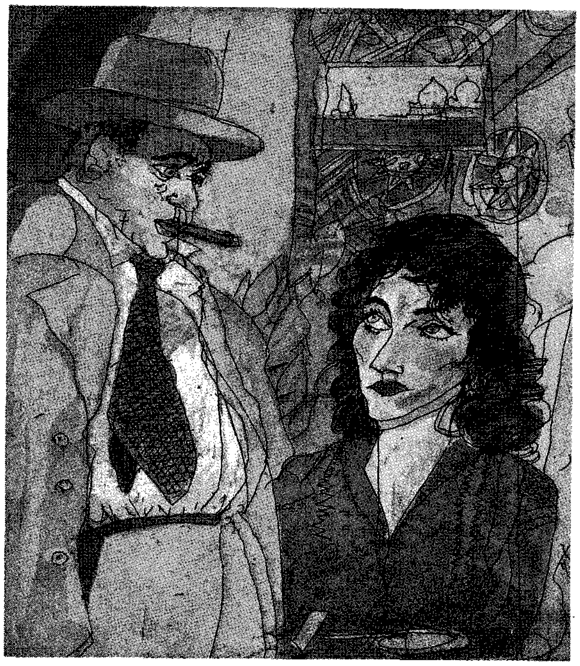
RETOUCHED

On the borderline again, forty years later.

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE trouble with movies today, as I never tire of hearing, is the sick violence, exhibitionist camerawork, and crazy cutting—all in all, the overwhelming sensation that substance is itself being overwhelmed by style. There is some justice to this thesis, but consider "Touch of Evil," which was first released forty years ago; it displays all the above qualities in copious measure yet remains, by common consent, a remarkable movie. It is now playing at Film Forum in a sprucely reëdited form, and no Orson Welles fan will require much persuading to go and see it again. As for benighted novices, all you need know about "Touch of Evil" is that it unfolds on the frontier between the United States and Mexico; the ease with which the characters pass through the checkpoints, and the choppy cultural mix that ensues, stay with you long after the plot has boiled away.

The hero, if you can call him that, is Vargas (Charlton Heston), a Mexican narcotics cop and a newlywed; his bride, Susie (Janet Leigh), is a blond American thoroughbred. Welles released his version of "Othello" in 1952, and there is a whisper of Desdemona and the Moor in the thwarting of this modern couple. What the two of them want—and what the movie fiendishly denies them—is the chance for time alone together. Their first kiss, a brazen clinch in the open, is interrupted by a bomb going off in the trunk of a nearby car. The victims are a politician and a night-club dancer; the bomb was planted on the Mexican side of the border but exploded on American soil, so the case comes under the jurisdiction of the local police chief—a wrecked and rotting hull of a man named Hank Quinlan, played by Welles himself. Quinlan likes to trust his intuition, which is a fancy way of saying that he invents evidence when he needs it. In a town where trash blows



Welles and Dietrich in a Hollywood valediction.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

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along the streets like tumbleweeds, the rot seeps even into Vargas; he looks noble enough (Heston was fresh from giving the Red Sea a center part in “The Ten Commandments”), but by the end he is fitting Quinlan’s sidekick—the loyal Menzies (Joseph Calleia)—with a wire and creeping along with a tape recorder, hoping that the chief will let slip an admission of guilt. Vargas is a pet hate of the Grandi family, the neighborhood mobsters, and, when Susie Vargas retires to a motel, Uncle Joe Grandi (Akim Tamiroff) sets a band of young bloods on her trail. The next thing we know Susie is lying in bed drugged, and the body of Uncle Joe is draped over the headboard. Just what happened at that motel is never made plain, and any recital of the nastiness that lurks in “Touch of Evil” makes the film sound as fogged and panicky as the unfortunate Susie. The miracle is that no crisper, more cleanly etched film came out of postwar Hollywood. The plot is a snake pit, and the camera crouches and cranes with what would, in other hands, feel like nervous indecision; but Welles knew that bad dreams are a model of clarity, and that their mad anti-logic makes horrific good sense.

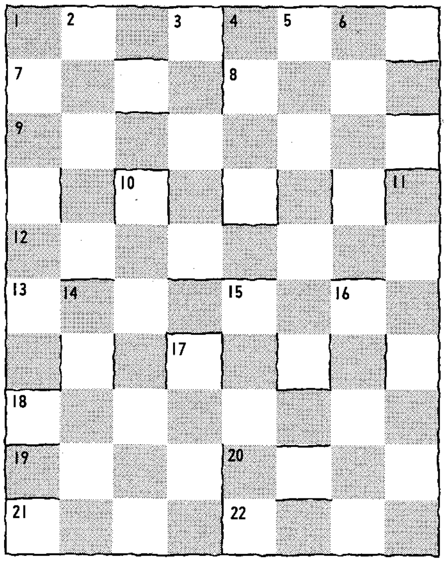
He told Peter Bogdanovich that the film was “unimaginably pleasurable to make.” Being Welles, of course, he handed it in to Universal like a prize essay and then bunked off to Mexico; in his absence, the studio cut its own version and ordered another director, Harry Keller, to add explanatory scenes. Now, thanks to a recently published Welles memo, a team of “Touch of Evil” devotees—including the producer Rick Schmidlin and the editor Walter Murch—have restored the film to its proper, if noxious, glory. Despite Welles’s own storm warnings about “the ruination of our picture,” it’s not a question of putting Humpty-Dumpty together again; the editors’ task was more the careful mending of cracks and replacement of shards. Humpty, in short, had shell shock.

The first thing you notice is the lack of titles over the opening sequence; we now have an unimpeded view of the long, infamous shot that follows the progress of the bomb over the border. Fans may mourn the loss of the Henry Mancini theme, with its blare of Latin jazz; in its place, however, we have a chorus of ambient noise—all the loose chatter and tinny radio tunes that Welles could hear in the hot night. His own first appearance as Quinlan has grown more complicated; we cut away from his perspiring bulk to a scene with Susie and the Grandis, and then back again, whereas Universal wanted viewers to get Quinlan neat—to drink their fill of the monster right away. “Touch of Evil” can be lauded or reviled as rococo noir, but it was Universal, not Welles, who topped it with some of the more tortured superfluities: a closeup of Menzies’s hangdog face, among the police files, as he rues his master’s years of wasted effort, or the bulging eyeballs of the throttled Uncle Joe. The studio lengthened that shot by ten frames, less than half a second, but that was enough to tip it from shock into schlock.

You may barely notice the repairs to the new “Touch of Evil,” but there is no doubt that the ride has become smoother. I still find Dennis Weaver’s turn as the Petrushka-like motel clerk daft and overdone; if people wanted to see Janet Leigh getting really bad room service, they would have to wait for “Psycho” two years later. But Heston is formidable in his three-piece suit and shades; the most thrilling spectacle in the movie is the wide-angle shots of his stride, which, as François Truffaut noted, make you wonder if Vargas wears seven-league boots. Truffaut called the picture a fairy tale, and the old black magic that rises from Quinlan’s visits to the local brothel is certainly overpowering. The madam, Tanya, is played by Marlene Dietrich in full gypsy mode, complete with wild wig; most of her lines aren’t so much spoken as exhaled in a stream of cheroot smoke. “Come on, read my future for me,” says Quinlan. “You haven’t got any,” Tanya replies. “Your future’s all used up.” These are heartbreaking moments, with Welles’s eviscerated Falstaff paying pathetic court to Dietrich’s slowed-down Mistress Quickly, and it is impossible not to read them as the valediction to a Hollywood that was dying. I suspect that what film buffs worship in “Touch of Evil” is exactly what will preserve it from the affections of less maundering viewers. It is a movie about loss of life, but that life—unlike the life of power in “Citizen Kane,” or the life of a family (any family, you might say) in “The Magnificent Ambersons”—is no more than the life of the movies. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 59 BY FRASER SIMPSON



ACROSS

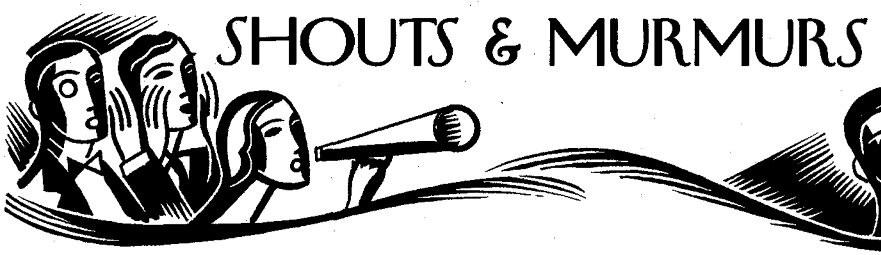
1 Nice fashion (4)
4 U-shaped pipe piece split from behind (4)
7 Path stretched out, we hear (4)
8 Healthy supply of water (4)
9 Never said I’m parking within the law (8)
12 Huge musician’s booking some funny business (8)
13 Contrarily, he has slob criticize inscription (8)
18 Breaks Fashion Issue hat (8)
19 Dorothy’s companion for true love (4)
20 U.S. uncle describes $100 swindle (4)
21 Group of boat workers made an early call (4)
22 Is canning stew the wrong way (4)

DOWN

1 Famous transvestite finally took trail (7)
2 I am landing on two feet (5)
3 Reportedly gave out a letter? (5)
4 Identical cord is cut short (4)
5 Concert article needs editing (7)
6 Out—I bail out (5)
10 Rattle a movable barrier surrounding it (7)
11 Divisions one’s put in school manuscript (7)
14 Former monk (5)
15 Drive out first of Oldsmobiles covered with corrosion (5)
16 Greek god accepts each song of praise (5)
17 Last of campers haul pack (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 58 appears on page 142. For a free copy of “The New Yorker’s Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords,” please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to “Solvers’ Guide,” The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.



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6. The book that starts, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”
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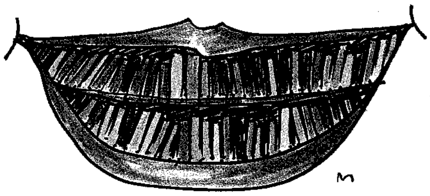

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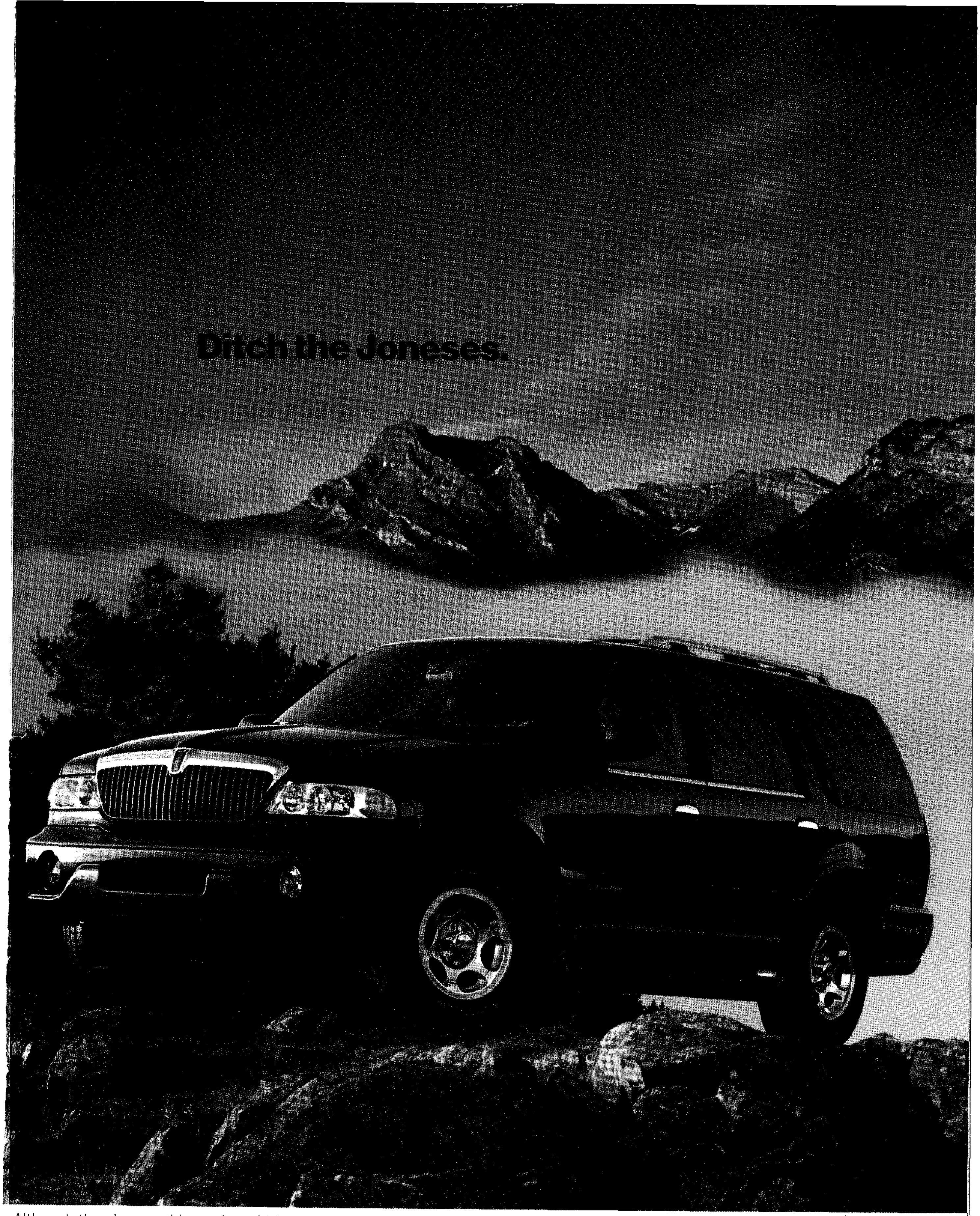

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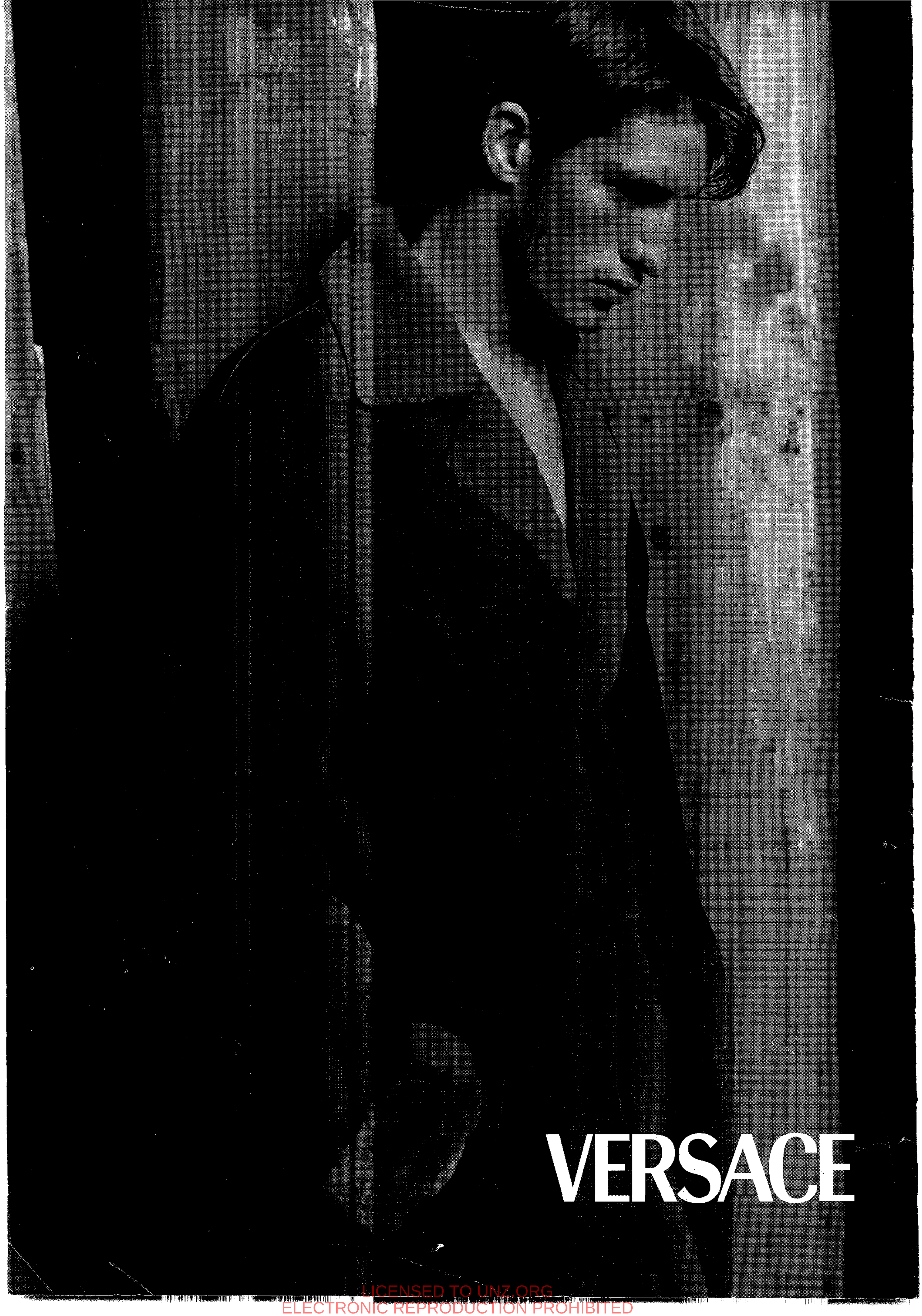
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